

## Egyptian MP dies of sunstroke

ASSIUT (AFP) — An MP has died of sunstroke after a visit to his sweltering district in Upper Egypt, a hospital official said Saturday. Hossam Kilani, 55, fell ill after making the rounds Friday in Dairut, part of his district 300 kilometres south of Cairo. He died before reaching hospital, the official said. Fifteen people in the region were hospitalised for heat-related problems on Thursday and Friday, he added. For nearly two weeks Egypt has been pounded by a heat wave due to continue at least until Monday, said an official with the National Meteorological Bureau. The temperature in Cairo, even in the shade, is 38 degrees Celsius and in Upper Egypt has been reaching 43 Celsius, he added.

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## Heat wave continues

AMMAN (J.T.) — Jordan will continue to be affected by hot weather accompanied by a low pressure originating from the Indian Subcontinent and extending to the Arabian Peninsula with temperatures reaching 36-37 degrees Celsius in Amman on Tuesday.

Meteorology Department source told the Jordan Times Saturday that "it is usual the East Mediterranean region be affected by such low Monsoon pressures during this time of year."

Asked about weather conditions in other countries in the region, the source said that all Eastern Mediterranean countries will be affected by the same low pressure, which will continue through Tuesday.

The source said, however, that it is too early to predict whether the prevailing weather will continue or end after Tuesday.

## Arab League chief blasts London, Washington for refusing flight to Libya

CAIRO (AFP) — Arab League chief Esmat Abdul Meguid criticised the United States and Britain Saturday for refusing his request to the U.N. Sanctions Committee to allow him to fly to Tripoli despite the air embargo on Libya.

"The rejection by Britain and the United States within the U.N. Sanctions Committee shows beyond a doubt that these two countries are going far indeed in their interpretation of the sanctions" imposed on Libya since 1992, he said in a statement.

He also said the rejection "contradicts the international resolutions upon which the Arab League and other regional organisations have based their efforts to find a fair and equitable solution to the Lockerbie crisis."

Earlier Saturday, an Arab League official said Mr. Meguid will fly to Tunis and then go on to Tripoli by car Sunday due to the committee's refusal to grant him an exemption.

"He will fly to Tunis and then drive to Libya because the U.N. refused to grant him an exemption," the official, who asked to remain anonymous, told AFP.

The United States and Britain, both members of the U.N. Sanctions Committee, voted on Thursday Mr. Meguid's request to fly to Libya directly.

A British diplomat said the request was denied because his visit did not have a humanitarian purpose.

The committee oversees the air and arms embargo imposed on Libya in 1992 over its refusal to hand over for trial in Scotland or the United States two men suspected of the 1988 bombing of a U.S. airliner over Lockerbie, Scotland, which left 270 dead.

Mr. Meguid told the committee the purpose of his visit was to discuss new developments in the Lockerbie affair with Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi.

London and Washington had previously rejected Libyan offers to try the men in a third country. But last week they indicated they would agree to a trial in a third country provided it was held under Scottish law.

## Shukri: JTC may not need strategic partner

By Ahmed Naser  
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — There is no need to sell off 40 per cent of the Jordan Telecommunication Company (JTC) to a strategic partner as originally planned by the government, Ali Shukri, the company's chairman of the board of directors declared yesterday.

However, Mr. Shukri added that "if privatisation and the introduction of a strategic partner are essential, then it is necessary and logical that the majority of people and not the minority benefit."

Mr. Shukri was quoted as saying by the Jordan News Agency, Petra, "if the decision is not beneficial to all, then it must be reviewed."

He said: "Justifying the introduction of a strategic partner as a means to bringing in new technology into the company or increasing the volume of its [subscriber] base cannot be accepted."

In early 1997, Jamal Sarairoh, minister of transport and telecommunications announced that 26 per cent of JTC would

be sold off to a strategic partner. Later this figure grew to 40 per cent.

In October of last year, Bassam Saket who took over the post from Mr. Sarairoh said that the partner would be chosen within six months.

In early July, Mr. Shukri was appointed JTC chairman of the board after retiring from the post of Director of His Majesty's Private Office and Director of His Majesty's Royal Communications.

Mr. Shukri denied that he was appointed to this post to supervise the transfer of 40 per cent of the shares to the strategic partner.

A few months back, Reuters reported that U.K. Price Waterhouse consultants, who have been working on reorganising the Jordanian telecommunication sector including making JTC more commercially driven, have evaluated its assets at \$1.2 billion.

According to a source within the sector, British Cable and Wireless submitted an offer worth \$320 million, and half that by U.S. Southern Bell.

Mr. Shukri said that even if the government pushed through with the sale of the 40

per cent shares, the price for these shares would be decided by "us and not by what is being offered."

Noting that one of the bidders proposed retaining the company's employees for two years before laying them off, Mr. Shukri said that this would create social problems, "something that we do not desire at all."

He said that the company was working on a new salary scale for experienced employees.

The JTC boss, however, said that if 40 per cent of JTC's equity is to be sold, then priority should be given to Jordanians and not a strategic bidder, especially employees who should get shares corresponding to their years of service.

Cabinet ministers contacted by the Jordan Times did not wish to comment.

Last month, Minister of Transport and Telecommunications Sami Gammo was quoted by the Arabic daily Al Ra'i as saying that a strategic partner for the JTC would be chosen within a month.

## Palestinians call on Washington to put 'real pressure' on Israel

GAZA CITY (AFP) — A top Palestinian official said Saturday he hopes to see Washington apply "real pressure" on the Israeli government to unblock the deadlocked Middle East peace process.

"We hope that the United States will put real pressure on Israel," Palestinian International Cooperation Minister Nabil Shaath told reporters here.

Mr. Shaath was speaking at a press conference with Palestinian President Yasser Arafat upon Mr. Arafat's return from a trip to Austria, Morocco and Turkey.

Mr. Shaath said that Mr. Arafat's trip was aimed at

"developing more Arab and international pressure upon Israel."

Mr. Arafat called his meetings "very important, positive and strong."

He also said he was "sorry that everything remains frozen" in peace talks with Israel.

In Casablanca, Mr. Arafat attended a meeting Thursday

of the Jerusalem Committee of Islamic states which called on its members to "take another look at their relations with Israel, including closing Israeli offices and missions" in their countries.

Mr. Shaath warned Israel

that "if they do not put forward new proposals conforming to the American initiative, we will leave the matter to [U.S. Secretary of State] Madeleine Albright and the American administration."

He said the American administration would then be obliged to force "Israel to honour its engagements."

No progress was made in a meeting of Israeli and Palestinian negotiators on Thursday.

Following the meeting, Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat told AFP that "unfortunately" the Israeli side presented no map for an Israeli pull-back on the West Bank.

Washington has proposed kick-starting the stalled peace talks with an Israeli pull-back from 13.1 per cent more of the West Bank. The Palestinians have agreed to the proposal, which so far has been rejected by the Israeli government.

Last week, Israel suggested setting aside three per cent of the U.S. proposed 13 per cent as nature reserves where the Palestinians would not have the right to build.

The Palestinian National Authority has rejected the nature reserve idea and insisted that Israel conform fully to the U.S. proposal.

## Israeli groups set precedent by helping rebuild Palestinian home

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Sixty activists from Israeli peace groups sought to create a precedent on Saturday by helping to rebuild a Palestinian house previously demolished by the Israeli army.

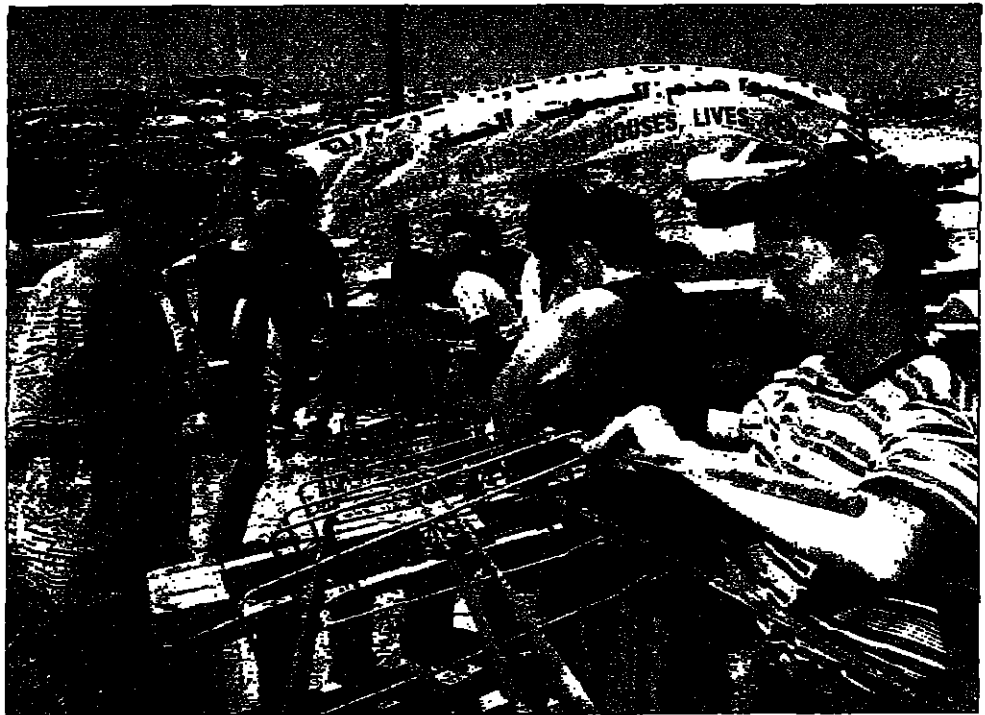
"This is the first time that Israelis and Palestinians have joined forces in rebuilding a house destroyed by the army," Jeff Halper, spokesman for the committee against house demolitions, told AFP.

The remains of the house are situated in rolling hills below Anata village near Jerusalem's Shuafat refugee camp and are overlooked by the Hebrew University on Mount Scopus, a Jewish enclave in the city's Arab eastern sector.

The building belonged to Salim Shawarma, a building technician and father of six children. It consisted of two bedrooms, a kitchen, a sitting room and bathroom.

"This house is not blocking anyone, it's not harming anyone," said Mr. Halper, as the activists watched by dozens of journalists set about clearing the surrounding area and shifting building materials. The Israeli army destroyed the house on July 9 on the grounds that it was built without a permit. Clashes ensued between local Palestinians and Israeli security forces in which 11 Palestinians were hurt, including a 15-year-old boy who lost a kidney.

All the houses in the area, some of which are shacks belonging to bedouin, have no permit and all have received notice of demolition, Mr. Halper said.



An Israeli peace activist works with Palestinians in Anata in Arab east Jerusalem, Saturday. The activists from Gush Shalom and the committee against house demolitions are helping — illegally — to rebuild a Palestinian house destroyed by the Israeli army on July 9 (Reuters photo)

The Palestinians frequently complain that the Israeli authorities never grant them building permission in areas under their control including Arab east Jerusalem which the Jewish state captured and annexed in 1967.

Mr. Shawarma had asked the Israeli authorities for a building permit on four separate occasions but was turned down each time.

"That afternoon we were mounting a demonstration in front of the offices of the civilian administration and heard that, unusually, the army was destroying a house in east

Jerusalem. It was unusual because normally they demolish houses early in the morning," Mr. Halper said.

"We came here and watched as the army destroyed the house. Because we know Selim we asked if we could help rebuild it," Mr. Halper said.

"Many Palestinians are scared to come forward but this guy agreed," he said.

As of Saturday the Israeli army had not intervened despite the fact that the building work, which is expected to take about a week and cost about \$20,000, is illegal.

But the activists expect the security forces to arrive on Monday.

"Most of the civil administration are religious and do not work on Saturday. Tomorrow [Sunday] is a religious holiday when, ironically, Jews mourn the destruction of the second temple. So it will probably be Monday," Mr. Halper said.

Whatever happens the Palestinian family will stay in the area.

"If they demolish the house I will stay. I have nowhere else to go. I will not leave this place," Mr. Shawarma told AFP.

## 'Don't impeach Clinton'

NEW YORK (AFP) — The U.S. public has no appetite for impeaching President Bill Clinton even if he lied under oath about his relationship with former White House intern Monica Lewinsky, according to a poll released Saturday. The Newsweek poll found only 39 per cent believed Mr. Clinton should be impeached if he lied when he previously denied in sworn testimony that he had an affair with Lewinsky. 35 per cent said an apology would be sufficient, while 19 per cent said no action would be necessary if Mr. Clinton lied. The poll found the public to be much more divided, however, if Mr. Clinton was found to have encouraged others to lie about the affair. 44 per cent said he should be impeached under such circumstances, but 50 per cent disagreed.



The government holds its regular Cabinet meeting in Madaba on Saturday just before Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali left for Mayo Clinic in the U.S. to meet His Majesty King Hussein (See story on page 3) (Photo by Youssef 'Allan)

## Majali off to visit King

AMMAN (Petra) — Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali left for the United States on Saturday to visit His Majesty King Hussein, who has been undergoing treatment at Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, since July 14.

Meanwhile, King Hussein on Saturday received telephone calls from Arab leaders, inquiring about his health and wishing him a speedy recovery.

The King received phone calls from King Hassan II of Morocco and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat.

In a related development, a Royal Decree was issued Saturday appointing Deputy Prime Minister for Services Affairs and Information Minister Abdullah Ensour as acting Prime Minister and Defence Minister during the absence of Dr. Majali abroad.

## Rare Iris tops other flowers in well-wishers' bouquets for King

ROCHESTER (AP) — Everything's coming up black Irises in one U.S. city, thanks to a famous patient at the Mayo Clinic — King Hussein.

Orders for the rare flower, and a barrage of bouquets in every other hue, are being sent by well-wishers and dignitaries around the world.

The King has been hospitalized at the Mayo Clinic since July 14 for chemotherapy treatments for lymphoma. His arrival has caused a boom in the floral business.

Several florists said they

have filled more orders for the King than for any other Mayo patient, including former U.S. first lady Barbara Bush, who was at the clinic in 1996 and 1997 for hip surgery.

"We're getting about three to four orders a day," said Kevin Patton, owner of Whiting's Flowers and Greenhouse.

According to area florists, King Hussein does favour the black iris — the Jordanian national flower. Arrangements have cost \$100 to \$1,500.

"We use a lot of exotic flowers as well as more

traditional roses and daisies," said Lori Bronk, a designer from Rochester Floral and Gifts.

Mr. Patton's company completed a \$1,000, 1 1/2-metre flower arrangement Thursday, the most expensive bouquet ever ordered at his shop. The bouquet of exotic flowers took more than three hours to put together.

Most flower arrangements go to King Hussein's suite and then are distributed throughout the clinic and hospital, a Mayo spokeswoman said.

## Soares: Annan to meet U.N. team on Algeria in Lisbon

ALGIERS (R) — U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan will take part in a meeting of a panel of prominent personalities in Lisbon next week to prepare a report on their fact-finding mission in Algeria.

"Yes, we will meet Annan," former Portuguese President Mario Soares, head of the U.N. panel, said on Saturday.

The six-member team, created by Mr. Annan arrived in Algiers 11 days ago to gather information on more than six years of violence in the oil and gas producing North African country in which thousands of people were killed.

The team has met government leaders, heads of opposition parties, human rights activists, lawyers of leaders of the now banned Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), parliamentarians and diplomats.

But it has respected a key government condition — no meetings with FIS leaders — in return for pledges for "full access" during its two-week mission.

The panel has also visited the sites of two massacres of civilians, a prison and several other cities and villages.

A spokesman for the panel said the team would meet in Lisbon August 5-11 to "agree on the outlines of the report that will present-

ed to Annan."

"The report itself will not be completed before one month at least," he said. "It will not include recommendations as this would be decided by the secretary general himself."

Mr. Soares said that his team planned to meet Algerian President Liamine Zerrouk before it ends its mission on Tuesday or Wednesday.

"We still have much work to go," he added after the panel met Leila Aslaoui, a former minister of youth and sports whose husband was slaughtered by Islamists last year.

Ms. Aslaoui said that the U.N. team asked "specific questions about the security situation...and the abuses committed by security forces."

"I told them that many officials and members of the security forces have been dismissed from service for committing these violations," she told reporters.

Human rights at home and abroad have criticised the army for not responding quickly enough to rebel attacks. They have also accused security officials of "extra-judicial killings, forced disappearances and torture" in their fight against radical Islamists.

Western estimates say more than 65,000 people

were killed since early 1992 when the authorities cancelled a general election in which the FIS had taken a commanding lead.

The panel met earlier on Saturday Islamist lawyer Mohammad Taberi, brother-in-law of FIS leader Abbassi Madani who has been under house arrest since 1992 for undermining state security.

"From the start, we had no intention of meeting any FIS leader. But we were keen to receive three lawyers close to Islamists so that we can say in our report that we have listened to all the parties," former Prime Minister Abdul Karim Al Kabarti said on Saturday.

Mr. Kabarti, the only Arab on the panel, visited Mahfouz Nahnah, head of the Islamist Peace Society Movement, who has rejected several requests for a meeting with the panel.

Mr. Nahnah had condemned the panel's visit as a "blatant interference in Algeria's internal affairs."

The team also includes former Indian Prime Minister I.K. Gural, former United States U.N. Representative Donald McHenry, Simone Veil, the French former president of the European Union, and Kenyan Attorney-General Amos Wako.









HER ROYAL HIGHNESS PRINCESS BASMA visits Kafrein Social Services Centre and Northern Bayyoudah Society for Social Development in Subeishi. The Princess called for greater efforts to make Jordan top the list of prosperous developing countries. Princess Basma said: "We are following the directives of King Hussein that call for adopting the slogan of team work." She stressed the need to create a suitable mechanism to achieve the best results, and thanked all concerned parties that supported the establishment of Bayyoudah society and cited it as a sample for joint cooperation among "our national corporations" (Peta photo)

## Arab Orthodox communities accuse Jerusalem patriarch of selling, leasing land to Israelis

By Rofaiah Nahhas  
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Representatives of the Arab Orthodox community in Jordan, Palestine and the diaspora on Saturday lashed out at the Greek Orthodox Patriarch in Jerusalem, accusing him of selling and leasing lands to Israelis belonging to the Arab Orthodox community in the occupied territories and Israel, a charge denied by the patriarch.

"It is the time to put an end to the heinous acts of the patriarch which endanger church properties in the Holy Lands," chairman of the Orthodox Society in Jordan Raouf Abu Jaber said.

Dr. Abu Jaber, who was speaking at a press conference following a one-day meeting of Arab Orthodox communi-

ties in Jordan, Palestine, the U.S., Canada and Europe, called for the "Arabisation" of the Greek Orthodox church in the Holy Land.

"Patriarchies in other regions of the world are presided over by nationals of those regions," said Dr. Abu Jaber. Patriarch Deodoros I is of Greek nationality.

Dr. Abu Jaber said around 70 dunums of the patriarchate's land at the controversial site of Jabal Abu Ghnaim, known as Har Homa to Jews, was secretly sold last year and the proceeds from the sale were sent abroad.

Israel recently completed the confiscation of Jabal Abu Ghnaim in Arab East Jerusalem, where 6,500 Jewish houses are due to be built.

He said that originally, the lands belonged to the Orthodox Arabs, who

sold their properties to the church after they were unable to afford the high property taxes imposed by the Israeli government.

He also called on the Jordanian government and the Palestinian National Authority to take all necessary legal measures to stop and cancel the sale and lease of lost land.

Patriarch Deodoros I in a statement denied the society's accusations, saying that the Patriarchate never sold any piece of land, but invested in some projects by leasing the lands for a long period of time.

The statement added that the revenues went to meet the Orthodox Patriarchate's needs, such as the construction of schools and churches.

The statement also asserted that the Patriarchate never sold or leased lands

in Jabal Abu Ghnaim or Mar Elias areas.

Chairman of the Orthodox Society in Jerusalem, Marwan Toubasi, said the Africa-Israel Investment Company, one of the leading investment companies in Israel, bought the right in 1993 to build a hotel on a 300 dunums of land belonging to Arabs, although the Patriarchate's greater responsibility should be to meet the needs of its community by building churches, schools and apartments.

Mr. Toubasi stressed that the Orthodox Patriarchate is a spiritual leadership and "should not act as a real estate office."

The Orthodox society has decided to form an investigation committee to follow the legalities of the matter.

## 'Community' is key in 30 years of successful research at Tell Hisban archaeological project

'There is no better way to be a student than to be a student at Hisban'

By Rami G. Khouri  
Special to the Jordan Times

HISBAN — Commitment, continuity, cooperation, and community involvement were the themes of a celebration Friday to mark 30 years of fieldwork on the Hisban archaeological project.

The Hisban project was initiated in 1968 by Siegfried Horn of Andrews University, and has since expanded to investigate other sites in the area, such as Tell Jalul and Tell Umeiry, under the aegis of the Madaba Plains Project.

Several people who participated in that first season in 1968 were among an array of speakers here, and an attentive crowd filled the Byzantine church on the summit, spilling over into the adjacent Hellenistic fortress and the Mamluke governors' palace and baths.

Master of ceremonies Lawrence Geraty, now president of La Sierra University in California, USA, said the initial season of work in 1968 launched the Hisban community and their foreign archaeological colleagues on "a voyage of discovery."

That voyage has been driven by "our desire to know who the people were who lived here, from the beginning of time to the present," Dr. Geraty said, adding that more than 1,000 people have contributed to the dig.

Fieldwork over the past three decades has revealed the remains of successive settlements and towns that once exploited Hisban's strategic location and bountiful natural environment.

The earliest settlements dated from the Iron Age (12th-6th Centuries B.C.), followed by Hellenistic and Roman towns (3rd Century B.C. to 3rd Century AD), a flourishing town in the Byzantine and Umayyad eras (4th to 8th Centuries AD), and a revival of the settlement in the Mamluke period (14th-16th Century). Hisban's next "rebirth" was during the 20th Century; the town is now inhabited predominantly by Ajarmeh tribe members. The area is also important for its many cave dwellings and shelters used throughout antiquity into early

this century.

The project director at Hisban today is Oystein La Bianca, professor of anthropology at Andrews University, whose focus is on both the site's ancient history and the recurring human and environmental cycles that determine how the residents of Hisban have always been able to ensure their basic food needs.

Dr. La Bianca worked at Hisban in 1968 and is now stressing two aspects of the work that maintain the pioneering nature of this project: community participation in site preservation and presentation, and the development of Hisban as an "open-air classroom" for students to learn about the archaeology and ancient history of this region of modern Jordan.

"There is no better way to be a student than to be a student at Hisban," he noted, adding that the pilot project to make Hisban an archaeological classroom can be replicated at other antiquities sites in Jordan.

Arrangements have already been made with Mahfouz Abdul Hafiz, a local teacher from Hisban, and the Friends of Archaeology in Amman to develop a local school curriculum for the site, as well as to launch regular fieldtrips to Hisban, including excavations in a corner of the site set aside for this purpose. Nelly Luma, Kathy Sullivan and others from the Friends of Archaeology Education Committee have started preparing educational materials for visiting students.

The project has also established walking trails around the large hilltop site, viewing platforms,

and explanatory signs in Arabic and English, making it easy for visitors to visit the site and appreciate Hisban's historical significance.

Dr. La Bianca urged Jordanian students who work and learn at Hisban to share the information they glean from the earth with their counterparts in the U.S. via internet.

President of Andrews University Niels-Erik Andreassen said that Tell Hisban represents a successful joint effort by Jordanians and friends from abroad "to discover another chapter in the history of the human family, to document the role of this place in the development of the three Abrahamic scriptures, and to train new generations of archaeologists who can continue the work."

His Royal Highness Prince Raad Ben Zeid, chief chamberlain, who reminded the audience that he himself had worked as a volunteer excavator on the site in the late 1960s, thanked all those who cooperated to make the Hisban project a model of international cooperation.

"We work together to know the facts of history and to learn about ourselves, and this allows us to pave the way for a better future and to work together for peace," he said.

Minister of Tourism and Antiquities Akel Biltaji noted that the success of the past 30 years has prompted the government and the people of Hisban to renew Andrews University's archaeological permit at Hisban for another 30 years. He reminded scholars, "as you dig into our earth, always remember also to reach our minds and hearts, to get to know us as people and also to tell the world about us."

Director of Antiquities Ghazi Bisheh, whose first job as a young graduate was a position in 1968 at Hisban as antiquities inspector, noted that an emphasis on multi-sectoral work at the Hisban site marked a turning point in the archaeology of Jordan, and has been enhanced by the pioneering work of archaeologist producing a typology of pottery from ancient Jordan. Dr. Sauer's typology produced, from Hisban remains, the baseline against which ceramic dating is measured in Jordan.

The director of the American Center of Oriental Research (ACOR) in Amman, Pierre Bikai, commended the Hisban project for its emphasis on site conservation and presentation. He hoped that other digs would follow the Hisban precedent of returning to the site to conserve it and make it easily accessible and understandable to visitors, especially young Jordanians.

Mustafa Barareh, a Hisban native who once worked as a manual labourer on the Hisban dig and is now a successful accountant in Amman, lauded Andrews University's work in making Hisban known to the entire world. He suggested that one or two Hisban students might benefit from university scholarships, and announced that a Friends of Archaeology Hisban branch was being established in order to raise local awareness of the importance of the antiquities and to help protect them.

The Madaba Plains Project is undertaken by a consortium of universities in the United States and Canada.



CELEBRATION: Archaeologists, residents and officials celebrate Tell Hisban's long history (Photo by Rami Khouri)

## See if you get it...

By Ahmed Naser  
Special to the Jordan Times

JERASH — Whether its being walked all over or standing still, Martin Good, better known as Jacob Begood — the last name pronounced "be good" by friends and colleagues — says he enjoys his profession tremendously.

Jacob and his wife, Jo, here with the Five Star Circus, are giving a double act known as the "Beter Half" at the Jerash Festival every night at the Oval Plaza in this Graeco-Roman city.

The couple, who were once social workers and English teachers, have become wayward travellers and have performed in India, Australia, New Zealand, performing separately and with groups.

They do what Mr. Begood calls acrobatic act — a mix between romance and acrobatics — that he says, "involves my wife walking all over me."

The act itself is centred around humour and interaction, and when Mr. Begood asks the audience for a lighter, the audience almost mobs him as more than 50 lighters fly through the air and land on stage.

"This is the first time that this has ever happened," he says, which prompts Mr. Begood to ask for something else. "Anybody got a gold watch?" he asks.

"It was too easy," he says, adding that audiences in the U.K. prefer to hold on to their lighters.

But this time, the audience is not as enthusiastic. "I thought that they might throw lots of gold watches and video cameras at me," he quips.

Mr. Begood does another three-player act that — known as the Last of the Mohicans — he considers more bizarre and surreal than the first. "I stand still for hours," he says, "making changes in my posture every ten to fifteen minutes."

Throughout the Last of the Mohicans, he dons black coloured mohawk punk rock gear and black makeup.

Meanwhile, Dora the Cleaning Lady moves slower than the statue itself when she dusts it, so that people notice small changes in the statue's figure, says Mr. Begood, while Dora the Dog scurries in the background.

The act has attracted festival goers that Mr. Begood described as enthusiastic. "Sometimes they get too close," he says, noting that Jordanians and the English have the same appreciation for the bizarre.

The act has nothing to do with the famed book of the same name, according to Mr. Begood, except for the occasional use of one American Indian proverb, interjected once in Mr. Begood's one-hour posturing: "When we eat the last fish and chop down the last tree, then will we know that we can't eat money."

However, there is no hidden message in this act, he says adding that the three-player act is done for pure entertainment.

The performance won a prize for best street performance in the U.K. during a performance in Guernsey, and getting the prize meant performing it on stage. "So I stood there for 10 minutes and all the audience yawned, then I got bored and left the stage," he says.

## The Grimm Brothers...

...a classic in any language, even Polish

By Dana Abu Sham  
Special to the Jordan Times

JERASH — Children had their own share in Jerash festival for culture and art last weekend.

The actors of Guliwer Theatre came all the way from Poland to perform in front of barely fifty spectators.

"We are very disappointed to see such a number of audience," complained a member of the group.

However, a children's play will always remain a children's play, no matter the language in which it is performed.

From Warsaw, Poland, actors of Guliwer Theatre performed three tales in the play "The Tales Of Grimm Brothers," a modern theatrical play, written by the author Bogdan Wasielewski and performed in Polish by two actors and an actress, incorporating some English words "to keep the audience from straying," said a member of the group.

Performed two years ago, "The Queen and the Player," "The Goat Little Goats, and the Wolf," "Little Red Ridding Hood," tried to convey to young spectators the serious truths hidden in classical tales.

All the tales end happily, though the last gives a warning, which Mr. Wasielewski describes. "The world is full of Red Ridding Hoods and each of them has her own wolf. So I advise you to pick up flowers close to your yard because there are fewer

and fewer hunters in this world."

"You meet two forces in your life each of them will pull you in its own direction. You will have to choose. We are idealists, so we believe that love will always win," added Mr. Wasielewski.

The three actors use simple requisites, changing elements of their costumes and of the curtain to create different stories.

The use of live guitar music throughout each performance produce an effect on the young, where interaction between performers and the viewers takes

place.

Isra'a Mohammad Mahasneh a ten-year-old girl told the Jordan Times that the play was good, the live music and close contact between the actors and the spectators was beautiful.

"If only the play was not in Polish," she said.

Others share the same opinion, complaining about the language, but understanding the message of the play.

The group has performed in Yugoslavia and Germany, and will travel to Spain next December to leave their impressions on young spectators there.



ON STAGE: The Guliwer Theatre performs well-known folklore for children

## Last chance to catch City Ballet of London

By Jordan Times  
Staff Reporters

JERASH — Ballet lovers can still catch one of the extremely rare opportunities to watch a ballet here at tonight's second and last performance of "Sleeping Beauty" by the City Ballet of London at the Jerash Festival.

The City Ballet's production of Tchaikovsky's famous ballet retains intact the charm of this popular fairy tale while enriching it with modern elements.

All traditional characters are maintained, explained City Ballet Director Harold King, but Michael Rolnick's choreography makes the story clearer and more meaningful.

"Compared to the grand productions of the Russian tradition, Rolnick's version is more intimate, with 24 dancers instead of the around 90 parading on stage in the old classical versions," Mr. King said.

Steps, style, and costumes also "lean more towards the

modern."

At Jerash's Northern Theatre, the City Ballet cannot count on the scenery, which usually plays a big role in very visual ballets such as Sleeping Beauty.

"The production could lose some impact, but with a beautiful place like this, and the fact that one can still benefit from the costumes and lighting effects, a good compromise can still be reached," Mr. King told the Jordan Times.

The rest is left to the talent and technique of Oksana Panchenko, in the role of Sleeping Beauty, and South Africa's Marius Eos as Prince Florimund.

The City Ballet of London was born in 1996 from the ashes of the London City Ballet — one of the illustrious victims of the economic recession of the 1990s.

When still London City Ballet, it made two appearances at the Jerash Festival, performing Swan Lake and Coppelia several years ago.

**Jerash Festival**  
1998





# Serb forces still on the attack in Kosovo

PRISTINA, Yugoslavia (AFP) — Serbian forces continued their attacks against rebel positions in Kosovo despite a pledge from Belgrade that the fighting had stopped, ethnic Albanian sources said Saturday.

The Albanian-language press in Pristina reported Saturday that Serbian forces were continuing to attack in several regions of the province in southern Serbia, the main republic in the Yugoslav federation.

Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic assured European Union officials Thursday that the offensive against ethnic-Albanian separatists had finished.

But Koha Ditore, which has close links with the rebel Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) fighting for the province's independence said: "The killing and destruction continued Friday in numerous parts of Kosovo."

Tens of thousands of refugees were still hiding in the hills, the daily added.

U.S. diplomat Christopher Hill, who has been mediating between the two sides, tried Friday to get more details from Mr. Milosevic about the end of fighting and on free access to Kosovo for diplomats and aid agencies.

One diplomat also expressed scepticism about the Yugoslav president's statement Thursday.

"We have a long experience of Mr. Milosevic," he said, adding: "He has not specified if the operation stopped in the region of Malisevo (a former rebel stronghold) or in all of Kosovo."

The Kosovo Albanian Information Centre said heavy fighting had continued Friday between Serbian units and KLA fighters in western Kosovo,

in the regions of Reke, Kece and Junik, near the Albanian border.

Serbian forces also attacked more than a dozen villages south of Pristina in the regions of Lipljan and Stimlje, on the main road to Prizren, the centre added. Three ethnic-Albanians had been killed over the last three days there.

The reports have not been confirmed by Serbian or independent sources.

An AFP journalist witnessed special Serb police units supported by heavy units of the army controlling the Pristina-Prizren road late Friday, after what looked to have been heavy recent combat.

The official news agency

Tanjung said a Yugoslav soldier was killed Thursday during a clash with a "terrorist group" that was trying to cross into Albania.

It also reported an attack on a police patrol near Lipljan Friday morning that left eight ethnic Albanians dead and three police officers seriously wounded.

Rexhep Qosja, leader of the radical Kosovo Democratic League, condemned what he called "Serb barbarism" in Kosovo, in a statement in Saturday's Koha Ditore newspaper.

He added: "The international community is hesitating to take measures to protect the lives of children, women, old people

and other civilians who were killed as their homes were pillaged and destroyed."

One Kosovo Albanian politician told AFP Friday that the KLA had made "enormous errors" in its recent operations, though it had not lost the war.

Former Communist leader in Kosovo Mahmut Bakali said the rebels had made tactical and strategic mistakes in trying to defend positions when it did not have the strength.

But he added: "However strong the Serb forces, you must not underestimate the KLA, which is driven by a motivation shared by nearly two million Albanians living in Kosovo."

## Food, water on way to refugees in forest

PRISTINA, Serbia (R) — Food and water were being trucked in to refugees who fled to the hills of central Kosovo during a recent offensive against ethnic Albanian guerrillas, the United Nations said Saturday.

The U.N. refugee agency UNHCR said it was taking flour, mineral water, family food packages and high-protein biscuits for children in the first air convoy to the refugees, who ran away from the guerrilla-held town of Malisevo last week.

An agency official told Reuters there were many women and children among the refugees. "They're living out in the open with very little," he said.

The agency said it had made contact with some 500 people, but many more were believed to be camped in the forest.

Thousands fled their homes and villages in the area of Oranovac two weeks ago after the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) tried unsuccessfully to capture the town.

They fell back on Malisevo, a KLA stronghold for months, but were uprooted again when the guerrillas pulled out without a fight in the face of a strong attack by Yugoslav army and Serbian special police units backed by armour.

In western Kosovo, ethnic Albanian civilians faced a similar predicament.

While Yugoslav President Slobodan

Milosevic insisted that a week-long offensive against the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) had finished, government forces continued to tighten the noose around the village of Junik, another KLA redoubt near the border with northern Albania.

Elsewhere, the main road from Pristina to Prizren was closed because of shooting from guerrillas.

"They are losing now and they are going nuts," said a policeman at a checkpoint near Stimlje southwest of Pristina Friday. "They are shooting at anything that moves. They have put mines on the road." The official Tanjung news agency reported a border clash along Serbia's border with Macedonia late Thursday night.

Security forces had prevented a large group of "terrorists" — Tanjung's usual name for the KLA — from crossing into the country, it said.

Serbian forces' week-long offensive scored major gains against the KLA, which is fighting for independence for Kosovo, a province of Serbia with a 90 per cent ethnic Albanian majority.

At least 500 people have been killed and 150,000 displaced in five months of fighting. Local estimates say as many as 50,000 more people have been uprooted in the latest fighting and many are now living rough in the hills, fearing to return to their homes.



Armed Serbs take a break as they patrol their village of Veliko Svinjare near Kosovska Mitrovica. The unidentified villager (left) wears an unofficial T-shirt with the Serb emblem framed with words 'Special Forces'. Ethnic Albanian guerrillas have been besieged by Serbian forces in the far west of Kosovo while sporadic fighting was reported elsewhere across the province (Reuters photo)

## Dublin frees IRA prisoners under N. Irish peace deal

LONDON (R) — The Irish government said Saturday it had freed six Irish Republican Army prisoners from a high-security jail as part of a Northern Ireland peace deal.

A justice ministry official confirmed that three of those released from Portlaoise jail were recently transferred from prisons in Britain.

They included Adrian Donnelly, who had served almost 21 years of a life sentence for murder, and Michael O'Brien who had served six years of an 18-year term for the attempted murder of a British policeman.

Mr. O'Brien was one of a handful of IRA prisoners granted temporary release recently to attend the annual meeting of the guerrilla group's political wing Sinn Féin in Dublin. Their triumphal entrance provoked outrage from the families of IRA victims.

Britain has yet to announce the release of any Northern Irish guerrilla prisoners from its own jails.

Northern Ireland minister Mo Mowlam said last week that prisoners from four guerrilla groups would be excluded from the early release programme because Britain believed they were still "concerned in terrorism."

Under the landmark Good Friday peace accord reached in April, members of the Catholic IRA and rival Protestant guerrilla groups will be freed within two years provided their organisations move towards giving up their caches of arms and explosives.

More than 200 republican and loyalist prisoners could be released by the end of the year under the scheme.

## Tsunami ranks as one of worst disasters

BRISBANE, Australia (AP) — The Papua New Guinean tsunami ranked as one of the worst civilian catastrophes Australian Defence Force personnel had encountered, a senior relief task force officer said Saturday.

"Disaster is not a strong enough word," Maj. Doug Wren, second in command of the tsunami relief effort for the Australian defence forces, said after arriving in Townsville, north Queensland, from Vanimo in Papua New Guinea's West Sepik province.

On July 17, 7-metre waves smashed dozens of makeshift villages along a stretch of northwestern Papua New Guinea. The death toll in the disaster is estimated to be about 2,100.

"It was just a moonscape when we flew over the scene in a helicopter the day after the disaster," Maj. Wren said. "To see entire villages pushed back from the beach into the forest or the lagoon was just heart-breaking."

## Japan's cyanide curry victims still sick

TOKYO (AFP) — Most of the 67 people who were taken ill after eating cyanide-laced curry in western Japan are still sick a week after the suspected attack left four dead, police said Saturday.

A police spokesman said 34 people remained hospitalised in the western city of Wakayama, while 29 others were getting outpatient treatment.

Four people including a 10-year-old boy and a 16-year-old girl died after eating the lethal curry at a summer community festival attended by about 100 people on July 25.

Police are still without a clue as to who mixed the deadly poison into the curry, which had been standing for hours before it was served, television reports said.

## Judge rejects Exxon's request for new trial

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (AP) — Exxon Corp.'s request for a new trial in the Exxon Valdez oil spill case has been rejected again by a U.S. federal judge, who dismissed claims that a guard interfered with the jury.

Judge H. Russell Holland found no grounds to allegations that a court guard coerced the jury into its \$5.3 billion award to fishermen, natives and others harmed by the 11-million gallon oil spill in 1989. He said the memory of juror Rita Wilson was unreliable and that a story she told of being threatened by the guard was not credible.

Exxon claimed the court guard, Donald Warrick, pulled one juror aside during deliberations in the 1994 trial, showed him a bullet and his gun, and suggested that another, recalcitrant juror be "put out of

her misery." The judge said Warrick was referring to Mrs. Wilson.

Warrick earlier denied under oath that the incident happened.

After later admitting he lied in court, Warrick was forced to resign in December 1995. He died of a heart attack four months later.

Despite Warrick's admission, the judge Friday said Mrs. Wilson did not have

any inappropriate encounter with Warrick during jury deliberations.

Exxon promised to appeal Judge Holland's ruling, as it has appealed the \$5.3 billion verdict. Mrs. Wilson, whose phone number is not listed, could not be reached for comment.

The Exxon Valdez went aground in March 1989, spilling the oil into Prince William Sound.

## Hundreds of protected cormorants slaughtered in New York

HENDERSON HARBOR, New York (AP) — Wildlife officials are investigating the shotgun slaughter of 850 cormorants in northern New York, where the federally protected birds are blamed for harming the fishing industry.

State biologists found heaps of cormorant carcasses, wounded birds and chicks squeaking feebly amid piles of shotgun shells during an inspection Wednesday of uninhabited Little Galloo Island in Lake Ontario.

More starving chicks were euthanised Thursday. The slaughter raises the estimated number of cormorants killed in the last two months to 1,000.

The scene included "dead and crippled birds

strewn everywhere, and dozens of orphaned chicks that need immediate attention," said John Cahill, commissioner of state environmental conservation.

Ornithologists say it is probably the largest cormorant massacre in the 25 years since the bird was protected under the Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act. The long-necked diving birds were probably killed last week-end.

Charter guides and others have urged the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to reduce cormorant flocks, saying the birds are eating the smallmouth bass and yellow perch are prized by anglers.

Conservation officers planned to interview anglers and residents who

might be able to provide clues to the shootings.

Each dead cormorant can result in a maximum penalty of a \$5,000 fine and six months in prison.

Since a record 8,410 active nests were counted in 1996 on Little Galloo Island, the cormorant population has plunged 30 per cent. Scientists are still trying to pinpoint why.

Officials were waiting for a study on cormorant eating habits to help them put together a fisheries management plan for the area.

Other protected birds have died in recent incidents across the country.

More than 1,000 birds, including federally protected snowy egrets and blue herons, were killed July 23 when their rookery was bulldozed in

Carrollton, Texas. The New York Times reported Saturday. There had been complaints of noise and odours.

And in Conway, Arkansas, some 300 egrets have died and another 300 have been injured when bulldozers began clearing land for a golf course and homes last week.

The Arkansas Game and Fish Commission and the Fish and Wildlife Service are investigating and construction is on hold.

The Army Corps of Engineers is checking to see whether the rookery is part of a protected wetlands area.

While egrets are not endangered or threatened, they are protected by federal regulations and hunting them is illegal.

## Effort to rescue Austrian miners slowing again

LASSING, Austria (R) — Rescuers hoping against hope to save 10 men buried in Austrian mine for over two weeks struggled Saturday to bore shafts to an agonising last few metres to where the men might be.

The rescue attempt became more urgent a week ago when another miner presumed to have been killed in a massive cave-in of mud and water at the pit in the Alpine village of Lassing was found and pulled out largely unscathed.

But the other 10 men were believed to be in a much deeper hollow about 130 metres down.

Saturday drilling experts were having to use cement to reinforce a

20 cm wide shaft which had been bored to within four metres of the hollow.

The shaft would be used to lower a camera, drinks and food into the mine — but once drilling resumed, it was likely to take another 10 to 15 hours to reach the chamber.

"It is going to be late at night before the drill reaches the air pocket," said rescue operation spokesman Alfred Zechling.

Engineers were also using a milling machine flown in from Germany to smooth out a 50 cm shaft which would be used to winch the miners out, and which had been bored to within four metres of a tunnel leading

to the hollow before it cracked.

That larger hole was being drilled through a concrete-reinforced steel tube which had previously been used for sending supplies into the mine.

No sounds had been heard from the depths of the mine since Wednesday when rescuers picked up noises, possibly knocking, that could have come from someone trapped in shafts or tunnels.

With no definitive news of whether the men, presumed dead until 24-year-old Georg Hainzl was pulled out last Sunday, were dead or alive, villagers were getting increasingly impatient.

"They have been going on now for 15 days and we feel too little is being done," said Manfred Drexler, one of a handful of villagers who unfurled banners outside the mine protesting against the handling of the operation.

"Do human lives don't count!" one banner asked.

The 10 were buried on July 17 after descending into the magnesium silicate mine in an attempt to find Georg Hainzl, trapped 60 metres down by a smaller collapse a few hours before.

He emerged from his 10-day ordeal in surprisingly good health despite having been without food or water

before the accident, the pilot had changed direction and changed procedure," going from Instrument Flight Rules to Visual Flight Rules, Mr. Deveau told a press conference in Lyon, from where the plane departed.

He refused to discuss any link between the accident and the fact it had been flying over the passenger boat Norway, anchored off Quiberon.

Lorient deputy prosecutor Marie-Annick Rossignol said the section of the main fuselage, found next to the wings and side engine of the Beechcraft, would not be brought to the surface until Sunday or Monday.

Both planes are about 15 metres down.

The Beechcraft took off

## 15 victims of French air crash named

RENNES, France (AFP) — The 15 victims, including three children, of a mid-air collision off the west Brittany coast of France were named Saturday, local press reported.

A Beechcraft plane carrying 14 people and a Cessna with one person on board collided Thursday and plunged into the Atlantic 10 kilometres off the coast near the town of Quiberon.

The dead included two babies and a seven-year-old girl, the regional dailies *Telegramme* and *Ouest-France* reported.

One of the dead was named as German Richard Moritz from Stuttgart.

The other victims, all French, included Beechcraft pilot Jean-

Michel Barbe, 31, co-pilot Stephane Viauzy, 27, and pilot of the Cessna Francis Glibert, 69.

Four more bodies were found late Friday in the submerged wreckage of the two planes, bringing the total number of bodies recovered to 10.

The search for the two flight recorders from the larger Beechcraft plane resumed at dawn Saturday.

Franklin Deveau, chief executive of the Proteus regional airline which owned the Beechcraft 1900, said Friday that just before the accident the pilot had flouted company procedure by switching from instrument control to visual control. "Several minutes

before the accident, the pilot had changed direction and changed procedure," going from Instrument Flight Rules to Visual Flight Rules, Mr. Deveau told a press conference in Lyon, from where the plane departed.

He refused to discuss any link between the accident and the fact it had been flying over the passenger boat Norway, anchored off Quiberon.

Lorient deputy prosecutor Marie-Annick Rossignol said the section of the main fuselage, found next to the wings and side engine of the Beechcraft, would not be brought to the surface until Sunday or Monday.

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Kashmiri families take refuge in a small room of a guest house in Chinari, 51km south of the Pakistani-administered Kashmir capital Muzaffarabad, after fleeing areas hit by Indian shelling. Hundreds of people living along the Line of Control have been forced to migrate after border clashes erupted July 30, killing scores of people (AFP photo)

## Kashmiri shelling toll hits 70 as five more Indians killed

SRINAGAR, India (AFP) — Five people including two Indian soldiers were killed Saturday raising the death toll from border shelling between Indian and Pakistani forces in Kashmir to 70, officials said.

"The shelling is continuing in four border areas ... however, the intensity of the firing has reduced," defence spokesman Major Prashottam told AFP.

He said at least 25 people, mostly civilians, had died in Indian territory since Thursday, when the artillery duel between the two armies began.

Police sources said nine of the dead were Indian soldiers, adding hundreds of villagers had fled their villages along the line of control separating the two armies in Kashmir.

Maj. Prashottam said Pakistani troops opened "unprovoked heavy artillery and mortar shelling on our positions and civilian villages

at several places."

"Indian troops have retaliated with effective shelling on Pakistani positions," he added.

Pakistani officials said Saturday 45 people had been killed in their part of the disputed territory since the shelling began.

They said 11 people, including three women and six children, were killed when Indian troops shelled Naganari village in Pakistan-controlled Kashmir late Friday.

Naganari is several kilometres away from the border and residents said they had never considered their village vulnerable.

Officials said Pakistani troops retaliated and inflicted "heavy losses" on the Indian army positions.

The start of the border fighting coincided with talks between premiers Atal Behari Vajpayee of India and Nawaz Sharif of Pakistan at a regional summit in Sri Lanka.

The talks, the first since the two nations carried out rival nuclear tests in May, failed after Pakistan said no improvement in ties was possible without a resolution to the Kashmir dispute.

India wants to set aside the dispute, the cause of two of the neighbours' three wars, while working towards closer trade ties.

Cross-border firing occurs fairly regularly along the 1,300-kilometre line of control in Kashmir, although heavy artillery fire is less frequent.

Pakistan wants a United Nations-held referendum to decide the future of Kashmir and has stepped up calls for outside mediation following the nuclear testing begun by India two months ago.

India insists the dispute must be solved bilaterally. Both claim the entire territory of Kashmir, a Muslim-majority state, as their own.

## 'Support Aung San Suu Kyi with sanctions on Myanmar'

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The best way to support the goals of Nobel peace laureate Aung San Suu Kyi is to impose multilateral sanctions on the Myanmar military regime, as she is advocating, the Washington Post wrote in a newspaper editorial Saturday.

By treating Aung San Suu Kyi merely as an icon of democracy in Myanmar (Burma), the world can ignore the brutality of her country's dictatorship and continue dealing with the regime, the Post wrote.

Diplomats from around the world have protested the heavy-handed way the military forced an end to her recent

six-day protest, in which she was denied the right to travel and meet with supporters.

"Treating Aung San Suu Kyi as an icon lets Burma's dictators off the hook of negotiating with her as the legitimate political leader that she is. It lets other nations express admiration and concern while ignoring the substantive ways they are keeping her tormentors in power."

"For it is contracts with America's Unocal Corp., France's Total, Singapore's and China's arms merchants and other companies from Europe, Asia and North America that allow the unpopular generals to hold on," said the Post.

"Recognising that fact, the United States at least has banned new investments. The European Union has yet to follow suit, and South East Asian nations continue to advocate engagement."

"Not only is Burma's regime one of the world's most odious, profiting from press-ganged labour and the heroin trade; but, unlike in most such cases, a legitimate, democratically anointed alternative already exists."

In the end "engagement has produced nothing, whereas multilateral sanctions — as advocated by Aung San Suu Kyi herself — could have a real effect," the Post concluded.

## Mother, son suspected of murder indicted for credit card fraud

NEW YORK (AP) — The mother and son under suspicion in the disappearance of a Manhattan millionaire have been indicted for credit card fraud.

Sante and Kenneth Kimes are accused of obtaining a Mastercard in the name of a Florida man and using it several times in June for drinks, dinner and shopping in New York.

Morgenstern stressed that the investigation into the Kimeses' alleged criminal activity — including their possible link to Irene Silverman's disappearance — was still being probed.

The Kimeses became suspects after several of the 82-year-old woman's identification cards and financial documents were found in their car. Court papers made public Friday show that a deed turning over

Mrs. Silverman's four-story townhouse to the Kimeses was forged.

The two were arrested in New York July 5 on an unrelated federal warrant for a bad check charge out of Utah. They are being held without bail.

The Kimeses also are under suspicion in the murder of a Los Angeles man and the disappearance of a Bahamian banker and a San Diego businessman.

# Cambodia's Hun Sen wants to form government fast

PHNOM PENH (R) — Cambodian leader Hun Sen said Saturday he wanted to form a coalition government with his opposition rivals quickly and he was confident a compromise with them could be worked out.

Hun Sen's ruling Cambodian People's Party (CPP) was clearly ahead of the slow count from last Sunday's vote continued, with the opposition FUNCINPEC party of Prince Norodom Ranariddh, ousted by Hun Sen last year, in second place.

Hun Sen has proposed a coalition with FUNCINPEC and the third-placed Sam Rainsy Party but they are insisting that their allegations of CPP election fraud be thoroughly investigated before they discuss such an arrangement.

The two opposition leaders have threatened to boycott the National Assembly to prevent a new government forming unless voting and recounts were held again in certain areas.

A government needs approval from two-thirds of the new 122-seat parliament, virtually assuring a coalition. The CPP, while the biggest party, will be short of a two-thirds majority.

Hun Sen said King Norodom Sihanouk, who diplomats say is in favour of a three-way coalition, was waiting to appoint the new

government before leaving for a medical check-up in China.

"We need a new government quickly in order to give time for our monarch to seek medical treatment," Hun Sen told reporters.

"Any delay in forming the government is a delay for our monarch to go for medical treatment. The king is waiting," Hun Sen said he was confident a deal with his rivals could be worked out. "Compromise can be found," he said.

Hun Sen said he also

wanted a new government formed quickly so Cambodia could regain its U.N. seat. This was left vacant after Hun Sen overthrew Prince Ranariddh as his senior co-premier in a bloody coup last year.

"We have to send a delegation to the United Nations General Assembly, so if we establish the government quickly we will also be able to occupy our seat," he said.

Prince Ranariddh travelled to Thailand Friday for rest and was due to return Monday, party officials

said.

Hun Sen has said informal talks on a coalition took place Wednesday night but negotiations could not start until Prince Ranariddh and Sam Rainsy accepted the election result.

The opposition leaders have also called for an end to what they said was a campaign of intimidation against their activists, many of whom they said were witnesses to electoral fraud.

The opposition and human rights group Amnesty International say

opposition activists have been victims of death threats and widespread intimidation since the election and hit out at the international community for endorsing the election too early.

Hun Sen, whose security forces have been accused of killing about 100 opposition supporters since he overthrew Prince Ranariddh last year, expressed doubts that such a campaign of intimidation was under way but called on members of his party to abide by the law.

"Any acts of intimidation are illegal, immoral and unacceptable," he said.

The National Election Committee released results from four constituencies Saturday, showing the CPP a clear winner in Svay Rieng, Kampot, Kompong Chhnang provinces and the Kep municipality.

FUNCINPEC, which won the most seats in Cambodia's last election in 1993, looks set to win in Kompong Cham, Kandal and Kratie provinces and in Phnom Penh, according to NEC figures.

The Sam Rainsy Party won the former Khmer Rouge stronghold of Pailin.

National Assembly seats will be allocated via a proportional system. The NEC said full, official preliminary results would be out by Aug. 4.

## Prince Ranariddh mulling coalition with Hun Sen

BANGKOK (AFP) — Ousted Cambodian co-premier Prince Norodom Ranariddh is considering forming a coalition with his arch-rival Hun Sen, a close aide, to the deposed co-premier said Saturday.

"He is rethinking things," the aide said, declining to be named.

"We are in the position that we have legitimacy. We are thinking about it."

The prince also held talks here with his military resistance commander Nhek Nun Chhay.

"I talked with Prince Ranariddh last night," the former Phnom Penh general told AFP. "We didn't decide anything."

Nhek Bun Chhay said it remained unsafe for him to return to Phnom Penh, where his forces were routed by strongman Hun Sen's troops during the prince's ouster last year.

"I can't go there now," he said, adding he would return to the resistance base of O'Smach on Cambodia's northern border

with Thailand.

The military chief, who has since led a small force against Hun Sen's troops in sporadic battles on the border, added he doubted Prince Ranariddh would be able to form a government and the royalist FUNCINPEC party would never accept another coalition with Hun Sen.

"We can't work with Hun Sen," he said, as counting of votes from last Sunday's Cambodian election continued.

Hun Sen's Cambodian People's Party (CPP) appeared poised for victory in the polls but was expected to be forced into a coalition with either FUNCINPEC or the opposition Sam Rainsy Party.

FUNCINPEC won U.N.-backed 1993 elections but was forced to accept a coalition with the CPP.

Prince Ranariddh arrived here Friday to rest following his election campaign, according to aides. He was due to return to Phnom Penh Monday.

## Russian forces besiege fugitives in remote Arctic

MOSCOW (R) — Police and troops, hampered by thick fog, were hunting for three armed fugitives in one of the remotest areas of Russia's Arctic coast Saturday, a day after 11 jailbreakers fought gunbattles with their pursuers.

"The operation goes on," a police spokesman said from the scene at Cape Schmidt, on the bleak north coast of the Chukotka Peninsula, facing Alaska and nine times zones east of Moscow.

Six army conscripts being held for murder and five civilians facing trial for rape and robbery fled their cells Friday, killing a guard and seizing 23 Kalashnikov assault rifles, a machinegun and other weapons and ammunition.

After stealing two army vehicles and raiding a local store for liquor, they were finally run to ground by security forces using helicopters near the settlement of Leningradsky, some 100 km along the coast, where fighting broke out.

Two policemen and two of the fugitives were killed and six others, some of them wounded, were arrested.

The three remaining escapees were still evading capture Saturday but their prospects looked grim.

The nearest settlement of any size, the regional capital Anadyr with a population of under 20,000, is 500 km away and there are few roads.

The wilderness is so forbidding that in the days when the region held gulag labour camps, prisoners were often not fenced in as flight meant virtually certain death.

Russian media commented on the growing frequency of such dramas, especially involving demoralised conscripts stationed in the further-flung outposts.

Four of the original jailbreakers were reported to have been arrested in May after shooting dead their officer and trying in vain to escape across the barren tundra.

## Russian PM, Chechen leader meet

NAZRAN, Russia (R) — Russian Prime Minister Sergei Kiriyenko held talks in southern Russia Saturday with the leader of the break-away region of Chechnya, President Aslan Maskhadov, Russian officials said.

Russian news agencies said the meeting ended after two hours and the two men would brief the media in Nazran, the capital of neighbouring Ingushetia.

Their discussions were expected to cover the future of the region and its demands for economic aid from Moscow as well as ways of curbing instability across the north Caucasus area and of cooperating against kidnapping gangs operating out of Chechnya.

Mr. Kiriyenko, who was instructed to arrange the meeting by President Boris Yeltsin last week, arrived at the out-of-town residence of Ingush President Ruslan Aushev in an armoured motorcade. Mr. Maskhadov was, apparently, already waiting there.

Nazran is 70 km from the Chechen capital Grozny.

Mr. Kiriyenko told Interfax news agency after flying in to Vladikavkaz, capital of yet another region in the ethnic patchwork of the North

Caucasus, that he expected a "normal, constructive conversation" with Mr. Maskhadov, who signed a peace treaty last year after leading victorious rebel forces.

Mr. Kiriyenko admitted earlier this week that Moscow had failed to fulfil its signed obligations towards the rebel region under a peace treaty signed by Mr. Yeltsin and Mr. Maskhadov over a year ago.

Mr. Maskhadov says Moscow has withheld promised reconstruction funds in a deliberate tactic to keep Chechnya unstable after Russian troops pulled out in August 1996 following their bloody but unsuccessful 21-month war against the guerrillas.

Mr. Maskhadov, who is seen in Moscow as a relative moderate, survived a car bomb attack 10 days ago. His forces clashed with radical Islamic paramilitaries on July 15.

He told Interfax in an interview published Saturday that there was no question of his discussing the issue of Chechen sovereignty with Mr. Kiriyenko as Chechnya maintained it was a fully independent state — something Moscow refuses to

accept.

Mr. Maskhadov said he was still striving for good relations with Moscow and for a common economic and defence space with Russia but said he was tired of unfulfilled promises and believed some forces in Moscow were deliberately trying to provoke civil war among the million or so Muslim Chechens.

"The people of Chechnya are tired of Russia's numerous promises, which for now are still just promises," he said of the economic aid that was pledged last year. "The main thing is that the next round of talks deals with real issues." He said he would be asking Mr. Kiriyenko when Russia, which is in a severe financial crisis of its own, would make good on those promises to help rebuild the Chechen economy.

He was ready to discuss the issue of crime in the region.

Dozens of people, including Mr. Yeltsin's own special envoy to Chechnya, are being held hostage for ransom by armed gangs. But Mr. Maskhadov, a former Soviet artillery colonel, said the best way to end crime was to the help Chechens restore their economy.

## Tiger attacks visitor at U.S. amusement park

VALLEJO, California (AFP) — A Bengal tiger attacked a visitor as she posed for a photograph with the animal after slipping and startling the big cat, officials at the Marine World amusement park here reported.

Jaunell Waldo, 45, was rushed by helicopter to an

area hospital, where she was reported early Saturday in serious but stable condition after suffering scratches and bites to her head and neck.

Friday Ms. Waldo went to the amusement park and paid \$250 for the privilege of posing with the tiger in its enclosure, part of a special programme for park

supporters.

However she slipped, startling the 159 kilo male feline, said park spokeswoman Stephanie Goodell.

The tiger attacked the woman scratching and biting her until trainers could pull him off.

Ron Whitfield, who has worked at Marine World

with lions and tigers for 23 years, said this is the first such incident.

"In normal situations it's very safe to (pose for photographs) with trained animals and trainers," he said.

However other patrons have been injured by animals at Marine World in the past.

In 1992 a man was thrown from an elephant during a publicity photo. The elephant then stampeded across a crowded public area and crashed through a wooden fence.

Three years after the accident the man received a \$600,000 settlement for his injuries.

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## Sunday's Economic Pulse

Dr. Fahed Fanek

## Foreign grants help Jordan

BESIDES THE value of soft foreign loans made available to Jordan, and the heavy burden of servicing outstanding loans, the importance of financial grants received annually by the Jordanian treasury is easily recognised. Likewise the importance maintaining the flow of those grants into the Kingdom at the same or even higher level is also acknowledged.

During 1997 for example, Jordan received more than \$400 million of non-refundable grants from Arab and foreign countries. The most sizeable grant was received from Iraq in the form of a 50 per cent rebate on crude oil prices. In 1997 this grant contributed a net \$188 million which appeared in the budget under the category "other income."

Besides the sizeable Iraqi oil grant, Jordan received \$58 million from the United States, \$46 million from the European Union (EU), \$40 million from Japan, and \$70 million through various agencies of the United Nations.

The above grants formed around 5.5 per cent of Jordan's gross domestic product (GDP) in 1997, which is current-

ly estimated at the revised amount of \$7.3 billion. They amount to \$90 per person or over \$500 per family. All these indicators show the importance of this category of income in foreign exchange, badly needed to support the balance of payments and the central government's budget.

The value of grants to the Jordanian balance of payments cannot be overemphasised. They helped bring the deficit in the current account down to zero in 1997 for the first time. Grants guaranteed sufficient availability of foreign exchange for all purposes, and enabled the accumulation of reserves at the Central Bank, which reached the highest level on record at \$1.6 billion — an outcome that fostered confidence in the JD and the economy in general.

Grants were instrumental in covering the gap in the budget. As a matter of fact there remained no deficit in the budget of 1997 after the receipt of grants. The deficit that economists usually refer to is an economic deficit calculated before accounting for grants. These grants are

excluded in calculating the deficit in the budget due to fiscal policy considerations, as grants are not a dependable or sustainable source. Nor do they represent a fiscal effort by the domestic economic activities.

Grants are crucial for a country like Jordan as long as it is expected to service its inherited heavy debts and to finance an intensive development plan to boost economic growth, generate more jobs, and improve the standard of living of the population, or at least prevent its deterioration.

It is obvious that the continued flow of grants to Jordan in the coming few years is a political issue of the first order. It should be placed high on the agenda of Jordanian diplomacy at all levels. If it is only for this reason, Jordan should carry on with its economic adjustment programme in cooperation with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), such a programme is an implied prerequisite for being eligible for foreign grants.

## Closer look at QIZ

EVER SINCE Al Hassan Industrial Estate in the northern city of Irbid was designated as a Qualifying Industrial Zone (QIZ) in March, not a single investor has applied for product qualification — the "golden opportunity" of acquiring free trade access to U.S. markets.

Instead, investors are exporting their products to the U.S. using the general system for preferences which provides access to certain products on the basis of reduced tariffs.

If the producers want to use the unique privilege of exporting duty free to the U.S., they have to include at least 11 per cent input from Israel — a fact that caused the interest of many potential investors to wane. They say the 11 per cent input from Israel at Israeli market prices will hike production costs and thus reduce the product's competitive edge.

Therefore investors, who did not hesitate to pump their millions in the QIZ, are trying to convince Israel to lower its input to eight per cent, but governments are taking their time in negotiating and deciding on investors' demands. This process could take six months or more. That likely to be the case, a year will have been lost, and the aspired income from the zone will not have materialised. Israel should realise that a lower input will lead to greater returns and encourage more foreign investments in the zone.

For Jordan, additional foreign investments at the QIZ are expected to provide more than 2,000 jobs, contributing to the reduction of the country's unemployment figures. Time is money and governments should therefore move fast for the benefit of both sides.

But while negotiations to reduce Israeli contribution at the QIZ are under way, local investors, still opposed to economic ties with the Jewish state, should take a closer look at the great benefits offered by the zone.

For years Jordan has suffered from a lack of direct foreign investments, and local traders and industrialists have been complaining of a sluggish economy. But now they have cause to whine no more. On the contrary, they should perceive the QIZ as a comparative advantage added to the country's already inexpensive labour and infrastructure. Although foreign investments from the most sophisticated markets can be seen scouting the QIZ, including international brand names, Jordanian investors are just acting as spectators. It is about time that they get to the business at hand with an open mind rather than miss the boat again.

## Inflexible interest rate margin not good for economy

By Mohammad Asfour

NEEDLESS TO say that interest rates are one of the monetary policy's major and most effective tools. The interest rate is the criterion that shows the effective demand upon liquidity and money supply. Both, the transaction and the investment demands for money represent one part of the monetary equilibrium equation, while money supply with its major components (demand deposit and money in circulation) represent the other part. The investment demand for money is subject to the leading interest rate and therefore functions and is directly proportioned with it. Consequently, high interest rates on loans decrease demand in investments, while high interest rates on deposits encourage more savings.

As this relationship shows high correlation co-efficiency, according to empirical evidence and the local market mechanism, one wonders why the most recent decrease in depository interest rates was not reflected in the lending rates; and why the margin between the rates in discussion remains while the banking system is the sole beneficiary of this phenomenon. Despite the fact that depository interest rates demonstrate a high flexibility in rising and falling and fully react on the short run to any monetary and economic renews, lending interest rates remain inelastic and do not respond properly to the mobility of depository interest rates. This would inevitably maximise the banking system's profits, yet simultaneously sacrifice increases in investments.

The inflexible margin

of rates has a negative impact on the economy's entire performance — a result of the non-justifiable increase in costs of investments, which eventually lead to high costs in domestic productions and increased prices.

*The inflexible margin of rates has a negative impact on the economy's entire performance — a result of the non-justifiable increase in costs of investments, which eventually lead to high costs in domestic productions and increased prices.*

The monetary policy is fully aware of the above-described negative impacts, yet remain dedicated to achieving and maintaining a reasonable margin between the dollar's and the dinar's inter-

est rates; a top priority of the Central Bank and the entire economy in terms of enhancing and stabilising fiscal and monetary policies.

As the Central Bank demonstrates maximum efforts in absorbing liquidity from the local market, CDs, and other means for the sake of maintaining a reasonable margins among the dollar's and the dinar's interest rates, the banking system is entitled to respond positively and cope in two specific channels. First, a high degree in responsiveness by the banking system regarding the leading interest rate must exist (i.e., when any increase or decrease affect the deposit rate, a consequent impact would affect the lending rate). Second, it remains to a large extent the responsibility of the banking system to develop the capital market, and the intra and inter-banks transactions of bonds.

The transparency within the banking system towards monetary policy is very essential, and the non-traditional way of thought and administration is again one of the main tools that could raise the efficiency of banking, and yield the proper results anticipated by the adopted policy. It is therefore the banking system that should react to upgrade flexibility and responsiveness towards the lower and upper limits of interest rates, bearing in mind that less proper responsiveness means more distortions in the economy.

The writer is chairman of International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) and the Amman-based World Trade Centre. He contributed this article to the Jordan Times.

## U.S. passivity in the Middle East is a recipe for danger

By Jim Hoagland

WASHINGTON — The Clinton administration struggles to maintain an uneasy status quo in the Middle East, pursuing a strategy that seems more designed to keep problems off Bill Clinton's desk than to get them resolved.

This passivity virtually guarantees that American moral authority and political leadership will be undermined in a region where standing still means sinking quickly into constantly shifting desert sands.

The commitment to muddling through — to keeping unsatisfactory situations from getting worse over the final 29 months of the Clinton presidency — surfaces most clearly in Washington's recent equivocal handling of Libya, Iraq and the Israeli-Palestinian peace talks.

The United States began this decade by taking a strong moral stand against destructive Arab radicalism and nationalism. The policymakers of the Bush administration consciously entered an Arab civil war, ignited by Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, on the side of countries that would not accept Saddam Hussein's vicious and primitive version of pan-Arabism.

At the same time, Bush & Co. coupled the drive to encourage justice in Arab politics with heavy pressure on the Israeli Likud government of the time and on the Palestinians to negotiate an end to their conflict. The combination of a just war and arm-twisting at the peace table eventually led to the Oslo peace accords.

The gradual descent from grand strategy to a legalistic, flank-covering course of protecting the status quo shows clearly today in the way in which

the administration has made keeping economic sanctions in place its primary policy objective in Libya and Iraq.

Earlier pretense of a commitment to changing the regime in Baghdad and making life more difficult for Muammar Qadhafi and for those who give him comfort and material help has been abandoned, in deed if not in word.

Mr. Clinton abandoned military strikes against Iraq in February in large part because of his fear that international reaction would make it impossible to keep the comprehensive sanctions adopted after the invasion of Kuwait.

On Libya the administration is now engaged in legalistic jujitsu over sanctions enacted to punish Col. Qadhafi for refusing to hand over two suspects in the 1988 bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 over the Lockerbie, Scotland.

The State Department has confirmed that it was considering agreeing to Colonel Qadhafi's reported willingness to let the suspects be tried in The Hague, before Scottish judges. A senior official later explained to me that there was no real expectation that such a trial would be held.

"Many people strongly believe Libya is bluffing. If the bluff is called, our effort to keep sanctions on, or even get them strengthened, will be strengthened," the official said. "And those who have been pushing for relief for Qadhafi will be weakened." The move is Clintonian: clever, and purely tactical. It misses the point of what is happening in Arab political dynamics, which are again sinking toward the lowest common denominator of intimidation and violence.

The absence of a clear American commitment to do more than muddle

through on either war or peace is encouraging Egypt, Saudi Arabia and other key nations to seek their own accommodations with regimes and forces that threaten them and oppose any American role in the Middle East.

When President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt flew to Tripoli last month to comfort an ailing Col. Qadhafi (and to build him up in the eyes of the Arab World), the Clinton administration did not oppose this in the U.N. Security Council or offer any serious criticism.

The administration "did not want to seem to be unreasonable" and weaken support for sanctions, the senior official said.

And when a U.S. pilot enforcing the no-fly zone over Iraq fired June 30 on an Iraqi radar site that had locked on allied planes, the Arab League immediately condemned the United States for interfering in Iraq's affairs and threatening civilian life, an accusation for which the organisation had not a shred of evidence.

These are signs that the Arab political establishment has come to feel that at a minimum there is no penalty for helping America's declared enemies in the Arab World.

Without a central U.S. commitment to combating actively the most dangerous and destructive political currents in the Arab World, Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu's stonewalling on building a durable peace with the Palestinians is wholly predictable.

Tactics and equivocation have their place in diplomacy and strategy. But they also have their cost, as the Clinton White House seems determined to prove in the Middle East.

— The Washington Post

## Sanctions reduce Baghdad to ruins

By Patrick Cockburn in Baghdad

AT THE end of the World War II the allies were astonished to discover that the animals in Berlin Zoo were all svelte and healthy, having received their exotic diets throughout the conflict. They concluded that strategic bombing was less successful in disrupting the German economy than they had expected.

Eight years of sanctions against Iraq have proved far more effective. Ani and Suker, the two lions in Baghdad Zoo, died in 1993 and 1996. Dr. Adel Salman, the director of the zoo, set in a sun-baked park in the centre of the city, says they died "of malnutrition and diseases we could not treat."

Only one big cat, a four-year-old Bengal tiger named Mallon, remains in the zoo, living on a diet of donkey meat bought in the local market. He does not look happy. He crouches close to an ageing air-conditioner in a stable at the back of his cage to escape the torrid heat of summer in Baghdad, where temperatures were recently close to 50 degrees Centigrade.

Dr. Salman, a former army officer with greying hair who has run Baghdad Zoo, little frequented by Iraqis, for nine years, explains his difficulties as he struggles to keep his animals alive. Whatever expedients are tried, resources are not enough.

"There are bananas and apples available in the shops for the monkey but they are too expensive," he says. "We feed them vegetables instead."

Everywhere Iraq is full of people just failing to make do. Eight years of sanctions have proved far more devastating for Iraq than three years of strategic bombing for Germany. The damage is cumulative. Prohibited from exporting oil except under U.N. control, Iraq has built no new power stations or water or sewage plants since 1990. It has not been able to buy spare parts for the old ones, which are increasingly obsolete.

Denis Halliday, the U.N. humanitarian coordinator for Iraq, resigned this month in apparent frustration at his inability to persuade the U.N. that the Iraqi infrastructure is collapsing. In an interview earlier in the year he said: "Electricity is 40 per cent

of what it used to be. We have estimated that we need \$10 billion and we are putting in \$300 million."

What this means for ordinary Iraqis can be seen in the sweltering ward at the 335-bed Saddam Children's Hospital in central Baghdad. The U.N. recently allowed in 10 incubators for babies. They are computer controlled and made in Japan but their manufacturers had apparently not imagined that they would be expected to function in temperatures, which are well over 40 degrees Centigrade because the hospital's air conditioning barely functions. As a result the sick and premature babies are placed in the incubators but their doors have to stay open because of the heat.

Far more is needed than food and drugs. The hospital has six Italian-made lifts but recently only one was working. Many of the patients are suffering from malnutrition. Dr. Qais Muhsin points to two-month-old Hanan Ahmed lying on a bed being fanned by his grandmother and says: "He has rickets or calcium deficiency. That is the first thing we look for in infants these days."

The malnutrition is not just because of lack of food. Despite food supplies deliveries to Iraq under the oil-for-food plan signed in 1996, a quarter of all Iraqis under five are malnourished according to a UNICEF report last year. A reason for this is what Lockton Morrissey, the regional director of Care International, says is "the abominable state of the water supply and the collapse of the sewage system." Children, who are already malnourished get gastroenteritis and die.

A heatwave this summer, severe even by the standards of the Mesopotamian plain, has made Iraqis deeply conscious of how far their infrastructure has declined.

Dr. Muhsin says: "The heat provides an excellent medium for bacteria to flourish. It makes the rivers more contaminated but people have to drink straight from the river because they are thirsty and there is no alternative."

Not everybody in Iraq is sick. Society still functions, though at a more primitive level than before. There is construction activity, particularly in the shopping streets in Baghdad. An Iraqi economist says: "It is cheap to build

because you only have to pay a labourer the equivalent of \$1.50 a day."

There are even Iraqis who have not suffered from sanctions. These are mostly farmers. Restaurants are full of men wearing traditional robes or dishdashas, who come from the country.

"The hotels are full of farmers," says the same economist, who did not want to give his name. "People who drive cars imported since sanctions almost certainly made their money in agriculture." Ever since the embargo was imposed in 1990 the government has kept the real price of wheat at the equivalent of about \$100 a tonne.

Overall, Iraqis have a deep sense of bitterness. They feel that sanctions are designed to keep Iraq weak and not because the U.S. or Britain is really frightened of such Iraqi weapons of mass destruction as may remain. "Sanctions hit the people not the government," said one Iraqi friend. "We are being punished worse than the Nazis who killed 15 million people and we don't deserve it."

— The Independent

Feature  
 Cultural s  
 as criminal

By Thomas Land

BUDAPEST — Hungary established a police force in a bid to protect its antiquities and other cultural treasures. The number of art thefts in Hungary rose from 702 in 1990 to 1,025 last year. "Criminals" exploiting the illegal trade in cultural treasures tend to deploy state-of-the-art technologies. The police usually take them using old techniques," says János Moriz, an interior ministry spokesman. But this is the help of the police. With the help of the international police organisation, we can introduce state-of-the-art data-processing techniques that will make exchanges of stolen police forces.

The task force has been set up by the police and the Ministry of Culture. The government bringing it into being was signed at the site of a 1902 robbery in which several valuable medieval golden pieces were stolen from the pieces were found in Austria and

the new five-member task force will coordinate efforts for safekeeping and encourage artists and administrators to create a database of stolen objects. It will also cooperate with other countries in the case of stolen objects. It will stamp out the new task force recently created to top commission was found the international conference organised by Interpol and the get-together was to work out a plan to improve collaboration and the plundering of museums, churches, collections and

Holland tame bouncers must ge

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# Features

## Cultural sleuths hit back as criminals turn to art

By Thomas Land

**BUDAPEST** — Hungary has established a police task-force in a bid to protect art, antiques and other cultural treasures.

The number of art thefts in Hungary rose from 702 in 1990 to 1,025 last year. "Criminals exploiting the illegal trade in cultural treasures tend to deploy the latest technologies, while the police usually plod after them using obsolete techniques," says Miklos Moritz, an interior ministry spokesman.

"But this is about to change. With the help of Interpol (the international police organisation) we are to introduce state-of-the-art data-processing techniques that will make possible exchanges between police forces."

The task-force has been set up by the police and the ministries of the interior and culture. The agreement bringing it into existence was signed at the Dezso Laczkó Museum, the site of a 1992 robbery in which several valuable medieval golden plaques and two Roman sculptures were stolen. Most of the pieces were recovered in Austria and Switzerland.

The new five-member unit will coordinate arrangements for safeguarding vulnerable collections and encourage owners and administrators to assemble a database of their possessions.

It will also cooperate with other countries in the recovery of stolen objects and promote a regional strategy to stamp out smuggling.

The team was recently introduced to top crime-busters from around the world at a regional conference organised by Interpol. The aim of the get-together was to work out ways of improving collaboration to end the plundering of museums, churches, private collections and

archaeological sites throughout East and Central Europe.

The meeting was held in Budapest. "The geography of Hungary makes this place the centre of East-West developments — and that fact has not escaped the notice of organised crime," — Interpol Secretary-General Raymond E. Kendall told me.

**"The geography of Hungary makes this place the centre of East-West developments — and that fact has not escaped the notice of organised crime," — Interpol Secretary-General Raymond E. Kendall**

beries in the region has nearly doubled since the beginning of the decade. At the same time, a vigorous, legitimate art auction market has sprung up.

Police say the trade in stolen cultural treasures is a relatively new but increasingly important activity of the Russian mafia. Shortly before the conference, Hungarian police arrested two Russians with eight priceless medieval icons in their car, apparently stolen from a church in Ukraine. Documents found on the suspects contained the names of several well-known Hungarian art

dealers and established a connection with a number of previous robberies.

The database assembled by the task-force will be linked up to Interpol's central register of stolen objects, in Lyons, France, by the end of the year.

The task-force will also concern itself with the return of objects stolen in neighbouring countries and smuggled through Hungary on their way to the West.

Raymond Kendall says that a 1983 case involving the theft of "Old Master" paintings from the Museum of Fine Arts yielded important lessons for the police.

"The case taught us that there is a great deal of prevention work that can be done. In that case, the work of the thieves was made easy by some scaffolding erected outside the window, providing easy access to the room where the paintings were exhibited."

"All over the former Eastern Bloc (countries previously controlled by the Soviet Union) there has been inadequate protection put in place by museums for works of art under their care, and inadequate inventories and descriptions of their treasures maintained by them. Yet good databases are essential for the identification of works if they are stolen."

The Museum of Fine Art paintings were recovered quickly, as were objects stolen in another major theft in Hungary, the 1993 robbery at the Jewish Museum in Budapest.

"We are lucky to recover them, some in Italy and some in Greece," says Kendall. But the overall recovery rate in art thefts is less than 10 per cent.

*The writer is an author and journalist who writes on international affairs.*

— Gemini News

## Holland tames its 'gorillas' Bouncers must get diploma or quit

By Christoph Driessen

**EINDHOVEN**, Netherlands — Swaying his broad shoulders like a sheriff in a Western movie, the brawny young man walks up to a smoking guest on the dance floor of the discotheque.

"Hey, would you mind stubbing out that fag? We don't like this in here. In fact, it's banned," he says as a voice abruptly orders him to end the role play.

"You've failed," says the voice from the background. The 1.90-metre trainee bouncer casts his eyes down like a schoolboy who has been scolded.

He would love nothing better than to walk straight out of the course, but he has to carry on since all bouncers in the Netherlands are required to have a diploma as of the middle of next year.

"You're the host. You are talking to your guests. You can't simply say 'it's banned,'" shouts chief trainer Arjen Appel.

Appel, who runs the training course at a youth centre in the Dutch town of Eindhoven, steps in to make clear to his 15 students what would have been the correct way to handle the situation.

"A very good evening to you, sir," he says to the smoking guest. "I am sorry, sir, but smoking on the dance floor is not allowed at our bar. It's very crowded in here, and something

might happen. Thank you for your consideration. Smoking is no problem over there where the tables are. Sorry again for any inconvenience, and have a pleasant evening."

Under the new rules aimed at taming the army of "gorillas," bouncers are only allowed to do their jobs if they can produce the newly established diploma.

Compulsory training was introduced after a number of violent incidents in which bouncers beat up unwelcome nightclub goers so badly that they required hospital treatment.

Under the new rules, initiated by Dutch Justice Minister Winnie Sorgdrager, all bouncers must go on training courses or will have their work permits revoked as of next summer when the new regulations come into effect.

For the estimated 2,000 to 3,000 doormen checking guests at Dutch nightclubs, brothels and casinos the decision means they must go back to the classroom to prepare for the exam.

The test, which comprises a written and a practical part, is anything but easy.

The written test includes questions like "There's a brawl, and a guest knocks out three of another guest's teeth. The doorman sees it and collects the teeth. What must he do next?" The correct answer is: "Place the teeth into a

glass of milk."

Putting the knocked out teeth into a glass of milk boosts the chances that they can be refitted.

For the majority of bouncers on the course the most difficult task during the role play is to keep cool.

"Don't threaten guests, convince them," is the message the trainer hammers home. "That's psychology," he says. "That's the way to get on. It has been proven scientifically."

Some of the course participants roll their eyes. "To be honest, I would never do all this here of my own free will," says the broad-shouldered Frans Princken.

"I've been doing this job for 20 years and never had any problems. Shows that I'm good at it, doesn't it? And this course here costs a lot of time and money — 1,500 guilder (\$730) for six days," he says.

He concedes that some of the tips he gets in the course are useful. "And it's also good to polish up our bad image. After all we have a reputation of being all brawns and no brains."

But a lot, he adds, cannot be learnt. You have to look a bit like Arnold Schwarzenegger or Jean-Claude van Damme to be able to work as a bouncer or else even the best training is a waste of money.

— Deutsche Presse Agentur

## Turkey and Georgia: A partnership against all odds?

By Manos Karagiannis

**TURKEY FORMALLY** recognised Georgia's independence in November 1991 but established diplomatic relations only in May 1992, after the United States had done so and after Eduard Shevardnadze returned to head the country. In late 1992 President Suleiman Demirel made a visit to Tbilisi, where he and Shevardnadze signed a treaty of friendship and cooperation. Turkey's aspirations in Central Asia and Azerbaijan, however, combined with the internal instability in Georgia, reduced Georgia's relevance to Turkish foreign policy for most of 1992-1993.

By late 1993 the picture had altered. Georgia lost control of Abkhazia and was forced to enter the CIS, and a resurgent Russia was making an aggressive bid for dominance in Transcaucasia. Closer ties between Georgia and Turkey therefore became advantageous to both parties. In January 1994 Shevardnadze made an official visit to Ankara during which he and Demirel signed a declaration affirming shared commitment to promoting peace, stability and democracy in Transcaucasia, plus a package of trade and economic agreements.

But while both Georgian and Turkish leaders affirmed an optimism that they could contribute to stabilisation in Transcaucasia, Georgia's limited freedom of manoeuvre was highlighted by the signing in February 1994 of a Russian-Georgian friendship and cooperation treaty and several other agreements, including one giving Russia the right to maintain military bases in Georgia for a period of 25 years. In a Turkish press interview several months later, Shevardnadze argued that Georgia "had no alternative" and that closer ties with Russia did not mean that Georgia was pushing Turkey aside.

**"Mutual need"**

Tbilisi views Turkey as a valuable ally in the region, aiding Georgia's efforts to maintain its independence by acting as a counterbalance to neo-imperialist Russian policy in Transcaucasia and providing the country with an alternative source of trade and investment. Indeed, Turkey dominates Georgia's economic sphere, having overtaken Russia as its largest trading partner. In addition, Turkey's importance to Georgia as a transport link with Europe has been underscored by an agreement whereby Turkey will build a 150-kilometre rail-

way from northwestern Turkey to Marabda in southern Georgia.

From the Turkish perspective, a democratic and stable Georgia could be a strategic partner in one of the world's most disorderly areas, allowing Ankara to focus its attention on other, less friendly, neighbouring countries, such as Iran and Armenia. Furthermore, Georgia's strategic location, sharing borders with Armenia, Russia and, most importantly, Azerbaijan has highlighted the importance of developing Georgia's key role in establishing a transport corridor linking Turkey with Central Asia.

Moreover, during a visit to Georgia in March 1998, Turkish Prime Minister Yilmaz identified Georgia as a country with which Turkey has "joint interests and with which Turkey is willing to strengthen cooperation in every field, being an independent and sovereign country which favours ensuring peace and stability in the Caucasus." On the other hand, when making a statement to a Georgian newspaper, President Shevardnadze stressed that "Turkey has always been close to Georgia in the latter's difficult days." During the period shortly after independence, when Georgia's very survival was at stake, Turkey extended credits and humanitarian assistance as well as expressions of commitment to the territorial integrity of its neighbour.

**Ethnic inconvenience**

Despite the presence in Turkey of a large émigré community of Abkhaz and other Caucasian peoples that support the Abkhaz leadership in its campaign to achieve independence, the Turkish government has consistently expressed its support for Georgia's territorial integrity. That stance is hardly surprising in the light of Ankara's rejection of territorial autonomy for its Kurdish minority.

Tbilisi is desperate to reduce Russia's influence in its domestic affairs, particularly concerning the dispute with Abkhazia. Ankara has offered its services as a mediator in the Georgian-Abkhazian dispute. Its desire to curtail Russian influence in Georgia was evident from its offer in 1994 to send troops to Georgia as part of a U.N. peacekeeping force intended to monitor the ceasefire between the Georgian government and Abkhaz separatists.

Ethnic strife within Georgia itself, however, could have a negative effect on its relations with Turkey. The Muslim Ajars, who

have their own autonomous republic on the Georgian-Turkish border, look in part to Turkey for help in their demands for greater autonomy, especially as Ajars live on the Turkish side as well. Another source of potential tension is the repatriation of the Meskhetian Turks who were deported en masse by Stalin in 1944 to Central Asia. Unlike most other peoples subjected to such a fate, only a few hundred have managed to return to their former homeland, although the group numbers around 100,000. And when home, they have been met with hostility and treated as interlopers.

Georgia's concern over a Muslim threat could, in the long-term, raise tensions with Ankara. Turkey invaded Georgia during the civil war in Russia after the revolution and it is likely that any nationalist Georgian government would regard Turkey as a potential threat, particularly if it sought to develop closer ties with Georgian Muslims. However, Turkey will probably avoid involvement in these ethnic conflicts since there is little public interest in the fate of these Muslim minorities and Ankara is keen to maintain good relations with Tbilisi. Similarly, the present Georgian government considers its bilateral relations with Ankara too important to be spoiled by such minority questions.

**Russia and the question of pipelines**

The strength of the Georgian-Turkish partnership is nowhere more evident than in the field of energy transportation. Both countries attach great importance to pipelines to transport oil and natural gas from third countries across their territories. Ankara initially failed to recognise the significance of a special relationship with Tbilisi until it became clear, in 1994, that the only available export route for Azerbaijani oil was through Georgia. U.S. policy towards Iran, and the continued conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Karabakh, have made the construction of a major oil pipeline across Iran or Armenia almost impossible. Hence Georgia appears to be the only reliable partner in the area that could provide Turkey with access to the oil-rich Caspian region. Georgia sees a pipeline as a means to foster independence and as a major source of income.

Ankara's success in improving relations with Georgia, however, may prove to be short-lived. Although Turkey has been able to

persuade Shevardnadze to support the Baku-Ceyhan route for the long-term transportation of Azerbaijani oil, Russian political and military influence in Georgia's domestic affairs may eventually undermine Georgia's cooperation with Turkey.

Russia wants the oil to be transported through its territory. There are several internal forces which Moscow could use as levers to bring pressure on Tbilisi to reduce its support for the proposed Baku-Ceyhan pipeline. Alternatively, a Russian-brokered settlement of the Abkhaz conflict — although unlikely in the immediate future — would increase Georgia's dependence on Moscow and might, ultimately, force Tbilisi to return the "favour" by renouncing its support for the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline. Georgia's ability to respond in kind to Turkey's overtures is therefore limited, and Ankara cannot count on Georgia's unequivocal cooperation to make the proposed pipeline a reality.

Another potential threat to Turkey's pipeline plans is Moscow's apparent willingness to support the use of force to remove undesirable leaders in Transcaucasia, as was clearly demonstrated by the Russian-engineered attempts on the life of President Shevardnadze in August 1995 and February 1998. Moscow's support for civil strife in Georgia is also connected to its goal of controlling the flow of oil in the region. Indeed Moscow is likely to step up its efforts to destabilise Georgia before a final decision on the long-term transportation of Azerbaijani oil is taken later this year in order to persuade foreign oil companies that the northern route through Russian territory is the only secure one. Consequently, Turkey's ability to promote its proposed pipeline project will, to a great extent, depend on the nature of Russia's involvement in Georgian affairs.

On the other hand, given that Georgia — because of its location — is sure to be an important transit route for Caspian hydrocarbons, Turkey will make every effort in the near future to expand its economic and political influence there.

*The writer is a Ph.D student at the University of Hull's Department of Politics and Asian Studies. He is writing his thesis on Caspian pipelines.*

— Middle East International

## Ancient wisdom brings mountain farms back to life

*New technology is not always the best way to solve a problem. Sometimes the past can hold vital clues to the right solution, as a rural community in Peru is discovering. Villagers are reaping the rewards, as scientists help them to apply green methods from another age.*

By Dan Palmer

**CAMBRIDGE**, England — Peruvian hill farmers are beginning to benefit from a project that is reviving the agricultural know-how of their ancestors.

The ancient — and environmentally friendly — farming technology of the Incas once produced abundant crops that helped to build and feed one of the world's major civilisations.

Their agricultural achievements fell apart as the Inca empire was destroyed amid bloodshed and disease after the arrival of the Spanish conquistadors in the 16th century.

However, archaeologists have recently made exciting discoveries, and a scheme to reapply the old methods in the hills around Cusichaca, in the Peruvian Andes, is proving a big success that may soon be copied elsewhere. Villagers who have partnered a British team in the project have grown a surplus of maize, potatoes, beans and cabbages which they are now able to sell.

British archaeologist Ann Kendall, who has studied ancient agricultural techniques in the

region for more than 20 years, helped launch a charitable organisation, the Cusichaca Trust, with the aim of using old know-how to assist modern-day farmers.

The trust's work, together with additional research by scientists from Britain's Cambridge University, has shown that the Inca farmers managed the fragile Andean ecosystem far better than their successors.

**... good environmental practices included stone terraces which the Incas constructed on steep slopes to grow and irrigate their crops.**

"We believe that the survival of the Inca civilisation was because of good environmental practices," says Alex Chepstow-Lusty, a post-doctoral student with the department of plant sciences at Cambridge.

These good environmental practices included stone terraces which the Incas constructed on steep slopes to grow and irrigate their crops. They have been discovered at a number of sites.

Each terrace had a stone base, covered with a layer of gravel and a metre of soil on top. Along the inner edge of each ledge, a narrow canal was built out of clay and stone to hold water and fish.

Kendall, the Cusichaca Trust's director, explained that such a method does not require fertilis-

ers because the sediment in the canals is rich in nitrogen from fish droppings.

Her team has been working for some years to apply their research practically. A terrace system in Cusichaca took three years to restore. Work included the rebuilding of parts of the ancient canals.

But it was worth the effort. After the restoration, 45 hectares

enrich degraded earth.

The Cambridge team found that before the trees were planted in large numbers, vegetation in the area was scarce. This was shown by a lack of pollen in the sediment samples. But after the trees were widely planted, vegetation flourished.

When the Spanish settlers arrived, many of these trees were chopped down for timber and firewood, and much of the Incas' stable and fertile farmland disappeared with them.

The Peruvian government has now taken an interest in the project and hopes to re-introduce the aliso to more hills and to replicate the Cusichaca success elsewhere.

Chepstow-Lusty says the government is keen to use the trees to help counter widespread deforestation. Wood-clearing to make way for more arable farmland threatens to destroy the remaining Peruvian forests within only a few years.

The Cambridge team is hoping that Peruvian students can visit their department to work with them on reviving the old technology.

*The writer is a Canadian journalist working with Gemini News Service in London on a fellowship arrangement with the School of Journalism and Communications at the University of Regina.*

— Gemini News



# Growth in U.S. slows

Answer: Thrown by an angry pitcher — PUNCHES



## Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

## Egypt's Cairo Bank supports Jordan's Cairo Amman Bank with \$15m credit

CAIRO AMMAN Bank (CAB) Board Chairman Khalil Talhouni told the general assembly Thursday that an agreement was signed recently with the Cairo Bank in Egypt to consolidate the capital of the Jordanian Bank and help expand its operations in line with the CBJ (Central Bank of Jordan) requirements. Under the agreement, the Cairo Bank in Egypt will extend \$15 million credit to CAB which will repay the amount over a 7-year period.

Mr. Talhouni said CAB was negotiating with the International Finance Corporation (IFC) to secure a loan but when the corporation tried to shift the credit into an equity participation, the Cairo Bank took the initiative and presented a better offer.

Jordan's Cairo Amman Bank posted JD7.5 million net profit last year compared to JD7.3 million recorded at the end of 1996. After tax and other provisions, the bank's net profit amounted to JD3.9 million in 1997, nearly JD0.2 million higher than the JD3.7 million generated in 1996. The chairman indicated that the net income from interest and commission rose by 12.6 per cent from JD25.2 million in 1996 to JD28.4 million in 1997.

According to the annual report, the bank's net profit available for distribution at the end of last year amounted to JD7.1 million compared to JD6.8 million in 1996. The amount comprised JD753,200 obligatory reserve, JD1.5 million voluntary reserve, JD2.4 million reserve for branching outside, JD1.7 million retained earnings and JD750,000 in dividends payable to shareholders.

The report showed total assets at JD788.5 million, JD87.9 million or 12.6 per cent higher than the JD700.5 million total at the end of 1996. Shareholders' equity was also

higher from JD25.1 million to JD28.2 million at the end of last year.

Noting that in implementation of the generally accepted international accounting standards and the requirements of the CBJ, Mr. Talhouni said the bank merged its accounts with those of its affiliated companies for the first time. He added that deposits of clients rose by 16 per cent to reach JD647 million. Deposits of banks, financial institutions and cash deposits amounted to around JD48.6 million.

The CAB increased its deposits at the Central Bank by JD30 million to become JD228.5 million. Of this amount JD142 million were in the form of certificates of deposit which means a 53 per cent liquidity ratio considered as good by international standards.

Credit facilities were up from JD259.6 million in 1996 to around JD280 million in 1997.

The chairman said the bank made a qualitative shift in the components of credit as the outstanding balance of advances in current accounts dropped from JD162 million to JD146 million. The increase showed in the loans category which climbed from JD104 million to JD146 million. Bills discounted were lower from JD18 million to JD13 million. The bank boosted its reserves for doubtful assets from JD16.8 million to JD19.2 million and also increased fixed assets to JD1.4 million as a result of modernising its branches and offices in Jordan and Palestine.

Mr. Talhouni concluded by saying that the bank's net profit before various provisions during the first half of 1998 amounted to JD4.5 million, less than the amount posted during the first half of 1997 (Al Ra'i + Al Arab Al Yawm).

By Tareq Ayyoub  
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Bahrain-based Arab Banking Corporation (ABC) Saturday bought the Housing Bank's equity in the ABC's branch in the Kingdom, worth JD11.7 million, a stock market source said.

Daoud Kishta, director of the International Financial Centre which brokered the deal, said that the contract involved the Housing Bank's 26 per cent share of the bank's JD20 million capital.

Mr. Kishta said that following the deal, which involved 5,200,000 shares sold at the rate of

JD2.250, the ABC's head office would maintain 84 per cent of the bank's equity in the Kingdom.

Prior to the deal, the equity of ABC's headquarters in Bahrain in the Jordanian branch, which was inaugurated in Amman in 1990, amounted to 60 per cent of the total capital.

"The deal came following the government's decision to increase the share of foreign equity in the capital of some economic establishments, especially the banking sector," Mr. Kishta told the Jordan Times.

He indicated that the Housing Bank's profits from the deal amounted to JD6 million.

"This step is an evidence that the stability in the national currency and the investment environment are still attracting investors," Mr. Kishta said.

Last year, the government lifted the ceiling of foreign shareholding in the banking sector, opening the way for foreigners to own up to 100 per cent of the capital.

Mr. Kishta noted that Saturday's contract was the "largest since the establishment of the stock market" in the early eighties.

ABC (Jordan) Director General Jawad Hadid, declined to comment on the deal, but was quoted as saying in a written

statement that the contract enhances the ABC confidence in the Jordanian economy.

"The deal is an enhancement to the bank's investment in the Kingdom which is part of an overall investments in the Arab World," Mr. Hadid was quoted as saying in the written statement.

The ABC, founded by Arab businessmen from Kuwait, Libya, United Arab Emirates and several Saudi investors, maintains branches in 35 countries.

The bank's capital amounts to \$1,800 million while its assets amounts to \$24 billion, making it one of the

largest Arab financial institutions.

The contract enhanced the Saturday's turnover at the Amman Financial Market, which recorded a weak trading.

The AFM's daily bulletin showed JD12.1 million in total turnover in the organised market, mostly on the ABC's shares.

Apart of the deal, investors showed weak enthusiasm in the stock market, where the turnover in the industrial, services and insurance sectors failed to exceed JD277,136, the daily bulletin noted.

## Two major South Korean banks merge

SEOUL (AFP) — South Korea's Hanil Bank and Commercial Bank of Korea announced Friday they would merge to create the country's largest bank, ushering in a new era of consolidation in the banking sector.

The merger will lead to the emergence of a "super bank" with combined assets of 102 trillion won (\$82 billion).

It is seen as a likely spark for a series of tie-ups among South Korean banks, under pressure from the government to put their houses in order as the country battles to emerge from a severe financial crisis.

"We have decided to merge the two banks to create a leading bank capable of competing with international rivals and to help overcome the country's economic crisis," Hanil Bank Governor Lee Kwan-Woo said. Sources said it would be a 50-50 deal, with each holding an equal stake in the new bank, to be temporarily called the Commercial Hanil Bank.

The main source of concern for the two banks in completing the merger is their combined non-performing loans, which stood at 13 trillion won (\$10.4 billion) at the end of March.

"The main point of the merger is not the merger itself, but the size of the government's support for the write-offs of the bad loans of the merged bank," L.G. Securities senior analyst Huh Yeon said.

Bank officials said the two banks wanted the government to extend financial support worth about up to eight trillion won to the merged entity for writing off bad loans and recapitalising.

## Kuwait may postpone oil infrastructure projects

KUWAIT (R) — Kuwait might postpone some oil infrastructure projects due to lack of financing, the country's oil minister has said.

"We do have plans and thoughts on holding projects, some of which may be postponed until next year and others until following years in light of the condition of the state budget," Oil Minister Sheikh Saud Nasser Al Sabah told Al Qabas daily in an interview.

Kuwait had planned to raise its production capacity by one million barrels per day (bpd) early in the next century from a current 2.4 million bpd.

A U.S. embassy report said the plan could cost \$13 billion. "These projects are not essential... and the fate of the country's economy does not depend on them," Sheikh Saud added.

Sheikh Saud said Kuwait did not require large amounts of money to improve the infrastructure of its oil facilities since they had been repaired and modernised after the 1991 Gulf war, Al Qabas reported.

## HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR SUNDAY, AUGUST 2, 1998

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

**ARIES:** (March 21 to April 19) This is going to be absolutely marvellous day for you, and the beginning of three superb days of fun, games and sports activities. Everyone will be in a fabulous mood, with you right in the middle of the festivities. In fact, you might be causing a lot of this to happen. If you aren't, get busy.

**TAURUS:** (April 20 to May 20) Somebody who has resisted paying you what he owes could have a change of heart. Or your process server could show up with the sheriff and take away his television set, which is almost the same thing. At any rate, this condition is in effect today, so think of a way to put it to good use.

**GEMINI:** (May 21 to June 21) People will be in happier moods today and they might even think what happened yesterday was funny. Don't laugh at them, though. You could get into a tiff over something just as silly or you could leapfrog over the upset. If somebody says something grossly insensitive, take it as a joke.

**CANCER:** (June 22 to July 21) Money is coming in today. It could be in the form of a bonus, a gift or saved money. You don't have to be told to check garage sales; you've done that already and probably saved a bundle. No need to tell everybody how you did it. Let them wonder.

**LEO:** (July 22 to August 21) This is a much better day for you. All the hassles of yesterday will seem insignificant as your sense of humour returns. You probably have a whole bunch of new stories to tell from yesterday's adventures. If some of them aren't funny yet, don't worry. Just hold on to them a little while longer and they will be.

**VIRGO:** (August 22 to September 22) This is a good day to clean house, if you can do it before company arrives. You're liable to have a house full of people before you know it and they're the wild, rambunctious type, too. Maybe you can talk them into doing some yard work — have a weed-pulling competition or something.

**LIBRA:** (September 23 to October 22) Today will be a lot more fun for you and everybody else. You'll learn more quickly, especially if you work with a group. You're smart anyway, but today you're really clicking. Don't hold back. Contribute your perspective, your insights and your unique point of view. Your contribution to the conversation will be a valuable one.

**SCORPIO:** (October 23 to November 21) Be careful with your money; you'll be tempted to toss it around. You can't afford to do that, so don't hang around with someone who can. You know how you hate to be outdone and if you get into a competition with a big spender, you could become the big loser.

**SAGITTARIUS:** (November 22 to December 21) Today will be a much easier day for you and just about everyone else. There's more humour to go around, for one thing. If others still aren't laughing, kid them a bit. You can probably help them see the silliness in what they've been up to without hurting their feelings.

**CAPRICORN:** (December 22 to January 20) It's time to clean your place. For instance, how long has it been since you could get into your attic? At any rate, it's a good day to hunt for treasures, and cleaning the basement, attic or garage is an excellent way to do that.

**AQUARIUS:** (January 21 to February 19) This is a good day to visit with friends, especially old friends you haven't seen in a long time. That will be a theme while Pluto is retrograde in Sagittarius. Retrograde means going back. Pluto means surprises and Sagittarius, for you, means friends. You could learn all sorts of interesting things during this phase.

**PISCES:** (February 20 to March 20) Conditions have changed just slightly. People will be enthusiastic, bouncy and all-around rambunctious. This could be fun, too, but it's a very different mood than yesterday. Go ahead and participate. It'll keep you from getting run over by the boisterous mob. And have a great time while you're at it!

Birthstone of August: Peridot — Golden Quartz

## Arab Banking Corporation raises equity in Jordan to 80 per cent

By Tareq Ayyoub  
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Bahrain-based Arab Banking Corporation (ABC) Saturday bought the Housing Bank's equity in the ABC's branch in the Kingdom, worth JD11.7 million, a stock market source said.

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JD2.250, the ABC's head office would maintain 84 per cent of the bank's equity in the Kingdom.

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Mr. Kishta noted that Saturday's contract was the "largest since the establishment of the stock market" in the early eighties.

ABC (Jordan) Director General Jawad Hadid, declined to comment on the deal, but was quoted as saying in a written

statement that the contract enhances the ABC confidence in the Jordanian economy.

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AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET  
HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - SERIKATI  
TELEPHONE: 607171 / 607179  
ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SATURDAY 01/08/1998

PAST 12 MONTHS HIGH	PAST 12 MONTHS LOW	COMPANY'S NAME	P / E	DIV.	NO. OF SHARES	NO. OF TRANS.	VALUE TRADED JD	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE
\$ 355.500	170.000	ARAB BANK	17.9	.91	16	440	96508	219.80	219.00	-0.80
2.100	1.100	JOR. NATIONAL BK.	13.4	4.24	6	1689	2780	1.64	1.65	+0.01
3.230	1.100	BANK OF JORDAN	8	0.00	14	2628	2972	1.13	1.14	+0.01
2.980	1.100	INDUSTRIAL DEV. BK.	11.0	6.60	3	500	785	1.57	1.57	0.00
6.510	2.610	THE HOUSING BK.	19.8	3.21	27	13250	41673	3.13	3.12	-0.01
3.450	1.790	JOR. KUWAIT BANK	9	0.00	2	90	167	1.85	1.85	0.00
0.870	0.590	JOR. GULF BANK	9	0.00	12	37600	22705	0.62	0.60	-0.02
4.000	1.090	JOR. ISLAMIC BANK	17.6	0.00	11	2167	3748	1.73	1.72	-0.01
4.460	2.100	ARAB BANKING CO.	23.6	0.00	1	5200000	11700000	2.25	2.25	0.00
BANK SECTOR TOTALS			INDEX: 290.81	%CHG: -0.21	93	5258361	11871335			
2.770	1.100	JOR. FRENCH INSUR.	7.6	9.23	1	250	678	2.69	2.71	+0.02
INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS			INDEX: 129.22	%CHG: +0.09	1	250	678			
2.240	1.470	JOR. ELECTRIC PWR.	10.0	5.36	20	10878	17052	1.53	1.54	+0.01
4.030	1.380	IRSID ELECTRICITY	16.1	3.85	4	1221	3174	2.65	2.60	-0.05
1.120	0.800	REAL ESTATE INV.	15.3	0.00	2	373	291	0.81	0.78	-0.03
9.800	5.100	ALRAI	8.7	7.02	1	100	570	5.70	5.70	0.00
4.600	1.870	ARAB INTL. INV. EDUC.	9.7	2.04	2	1100	2155	1.97	1.96	-0.01
1.070	0.890	SARSA EDUCATION	21.0	0.00	5	1850	1683	0.90	0.91	+0.01
1.830	1.300	UNIFIED CO.	5.8	8.46	7	2500	3270	1.33	1.30	-0.03
SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS			INDEX: 111.10	%CHG: -0.13	41	18022	28195			
1.160	0.960	ATTANQUEH	9	0.00	1	650	715	1.10	1.10	0.00
4.000	1.850	JOR. COBERT FACT.	11.0	5.95	19	9201	16978	1.86	1.85	-0.01
4.110	1.800	JOR. PROMOTIVE VIBES	16.5	0.00	1	100	175	1.83	1.75	-0.08
6.500	4.900	ARAB POTASH CO.	23.6	4.17	8	9800	47040	4.90	4.80	-0.10
11.250	9.870	JOR. PETROL. REFINERY	10.4	8.27	2	26	279	10.73	10.75	+0.02
1.570	1.010	WOODEN INDUSTRIES	11.1	7.14	4	673	572	1.01	1.00	-0.01
8.740	2.400	ARAB FRASH. WAF.	7.1	2.90	25	8510	21255	2.97	2.99	+0.02
6.100	2.550	JOR. CERAMIC IND.	6.5	6.67	1	100	180	1.55	1.50	-0.05
1.440	1.020	JOR. PIPES MANFCT.	9.2	9.01	1	150	167	1.11	1.11	0.00
8.540	5.300	ARAB CEREAL. DISTRIB.	7.9	7.05	3	850	6034	7.06	7.09	+0.03
6.350	4.700	BAR ALUMINA JV. INV.	6.3	6.73	15	7100	36964	5.24	5.20	-0.04
2.980	1.800	ARAB ALUM. IND.	13.7	13.51	1	500	925	1.81	1.85	+0.04
1.100	0.400	LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	14.5	0.00	2	3750	1613	0.43	0.43	0.00
1.050	0.670	ARAB PAPER CONVT. TRD.	24.7	0.00	3	1650	1337	0.77	0.81	+0.04
1.650	0.850	NATIONAL STEEL IND.	9	0.00	1	100	42	0.44	0.42	-0.02
0.590	0.370	INTERMED. PETRO. CHEM.	9	0.00	9	19950	6223	0.39	0.40	+0.01
0.690	0.500	JOR. ROCKWELL INVEST.	9	0.00	1	150	71	0.80	0.47	-0.33
2.380	0.790	KHAL. CABLE WIRE. NVAC	37.5	0.00	1	1000	800	0.80	0.80	0.00
1.470	1.150	ARAB PAPER CHEM.	13.8	4.80	6	1550	1934	1.25	1.25	0.00
0.750	0.390	KAWTHER INVEST.	9	0.00	1	100	39	0.39	0.39	0.00
1.300	0.740	UNIV. MOON. INDUS.	12.0	8.00	9	2849	2143	0.75	0.75	0.00
1.050	0.600	JOR. LIDS. RESOURCES	0.00	0.00	6	4500	2475	0.54	0.52	-0.02
1.600	1.200	NAT. CEMENT CO.	8.6	8.20	5	1350	1659	1.22	1.22	0.00
1.080	0.750	JOR. NEW CABLE CO.	10.6	13.33	9	6500	4875	0.75	0.75	0.00
1.610	1.120	FC - DAY READY WEAR	41.2	0.00	3	6650	7665	1.21	1.17	-0.04
1.310	1.000	INTL. TOBACCO	7.0	5.83	8	450	480	1.00	1.00	0.00
0.890	0.660	JORDAN STEEL	9.5	0.24	2	100500	85425	0.85	0.85	0.00
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS			INDEX: 87.06	%CHG: -1.38	143	184505	248264			
GRAND TOTAL			INDEX: 179.28	%CHG: -0.49	278	5461138	12148471			
PARALLEL MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SATURDAY 01/08/1998										
N 1.050	0.980	EXPORT & FIN. BKK. 75%	16.7	0.00	1	300	195	0.89	0.90	+0.01
0.500	0.340	JOR. TRADE FAC.	9	0.00	3	1500	558	0.44	0.44	0.00
0.800	0.510	UNION INV.	9	0.00	3	14000	7140	0.	0.	0.00
0.620	0.480	ARAB JVN. INVEST.	9	0.00	6	14427	4194	0.29	0.30	+0.01
N 2.220	0.030	CEBURY INV. GROUP	0	0.00	8	17000	20270	1.20	1.20	0.00
1.000	0.500	ARAB JOR. INTL. CO.	16.2	0.00	1	250	135	0.50	0.50	0.00
0.600	0.330	ARAB FOOD & MED.	9	0.00	4	3150	1071	0.33	0.35	+0.02
0.420	0.240	ARAB INTL. INV. TRD.	28.8	0.00	10	25600	6194	0.24	0.25	+0.01
0.860	0.350	HATL. WOLF. INC. MARIQCO	0	0.00	9	10000	3600	0.36	0.36	0.00
0.580	0.300	KUWAIT PAPER SOY	10.0	0.00	3	7500	2975	0.83	0.83	0.00
1.750	0.950	UNION TOBACCO 87.5%	7.5	0.00	1	600	915	1.67	1.65	-0.02
0.350	0.220	INTL. ENG.	9	0.00	1	1000	220	0.22	0.23	+0.01
0.950	0.500	ADVANCED FRASER. IND.	10.0	0.00	1	1000	59	0.59	0.59	0.00
0.770	0.580	MD. ALUMINUM	32.7	0.00	23	11269	7412	0.64	0.66	+0.02
N 1.310	0.830	NUSTRIDAR	9	0.00	8	4813	5565	0.83	0.81	-0.02
N 1.000	0.720	AL-KESBAL PRINTING CO	11.0	10.52	9	7050	5076	0.72	0.72	0.00
GRAND TOTAL					97	121251	67200			
* New 12 months low										
S Stock of 1000 during the past 12 months										
L Listed during the past 12 months										
P P/E ratio is 100 or more										
+ Negative P/E										
N Earning is zero or N/A for the most recent year										



## World Basketball Championships

### Four teams remain unbeaten

ATHENS (AP) — The birthplace of the Olympics is building a basketball tradition. In addition to Lithuania, Yugoslavia, and Spain remain unbeaten after the end of the first round of the Basketball World Championships here on Friday.

Buoyed by boisterous crowds, the host of the Basketball World Championship has emerged as a medal contender with three straight victories.

"We haven't had our best game yet, but we played well enough to win all three," coach Panagiotis Yannakis said after Greece's 68-57 win over Senegal on Friday night put the team into the tournament's second round as the winner of Group A.

In a performance typical of the team's balance, three players — Dimitri Papanikolaou, Giorgios Sigalas and Angelos Koronios — shared scoring honors with 11 points apiece.

Fragiskos Alvertis, a 2.06-metre forward, added 10. He led Greece to its earlier wins over Italy and Canada, averaging 19.5 points per game.

After Saturday's off-day, play resumes Sunday with the round-robin second round, which takes the top 12 teams so far, and puts them in two brackets.

One group's games Sunday are Greece vs. Puerto Rico, Russia vs. Italy, and Yugoslavia vs. Canada. The other group has the United States vs. Argentina, Lithuania vs. Australia and Spain vs. Brazil.

Greece burst onto the international basketball scene by taking the 1987 European title. Since then, the team has finished fourth at the 1994 world championship and fifth at the Atlanta Olympics. Pro teams from the Greek League have won two of the last three European club titles.

But the lack of a long-standing history of success has some fans cautious.

"I think that it will be difficult to win the gold medal here because we will have to beat good teams like maybe the U.S., Lithuania or Yugoslavia," said Costas Moschomakis, 16, his hair painted blue and his voice hoarse from cheering. "We don't know if we will make it."

It will be tough, if history is any indication.

The last eight world titles have been divided up by the United States, Yugoslavia and the old Soviet Union. Greece will likely have to beat Yugoslavia or Russia to reach the quarterfinals here.

Moschomakis was part of the near-sellout crowd that watched the win over Senegal at the Peace and Friendship arena. Greece has been playing to packed houses this week while crowds in the hundreds have watched other games.

In addition to the hosts, Yugoslavia, Lithuania and Spain all reached the next stage with 3-0 records. The United States, without its Dream Team because of the NBA labor dispute, is 2-1 heading into the second round.

#### PRELIMINARY ROUND

Group A Team	W	L	PF	PA	Pts
Greece	3	0	210	185	6
Italy	2	1	211	209	4
Canada	1	2	211	214	2
Senegal	0	3	180	214	0

Group B Team	W	L	PF	PA	Pts
Yugoslavia	3	0	261	194	6
Russia	2	1	243	213	4
Puerto Rico	1	2	217	223	2
Japan	0	3	169	260	0

Group C Team	W	L	PF	PA	Pts
Lithuania	3	0	247	200	6
United States	2	1	253	205	4
Brazil	1	2	197	222	2
South Korea	0	3	191	261	0

Group D Team	W	L	PF	PA	Pts
Spain	3	0	225	201	6
Argentina	2	1	201	181	4
Australia	1	2	198	207	2
Nigeria	0	3	183	218	0

#### SECOND ROUND

Group E Team	W	L	PF	PA	Pts
Yugoslavia	2	0	162	140	4
Greece	2	0	142	128	0
Russia	1	1	160	155	2
Italy	1	1	135	133	0
Canada	0	2	141	157	0
Puerto Rico	0	2	139	166	0

Group F Team	W	L	PF	PA	Pts
Lithuania	2	0	150	144	4
Spain	2	0	68	67	4
United States	1	1	165	143	2
Argentina	1	1	133	130	2
Australia	0	2	138	143	0
Brazil	0	2	121	149	0



Nigerian forward Tunji Awojobi prepares to make a shot in front of Australia's (L-R) Andrew Vlahov, Chris Astley and Sam Mackinnon during second half action in their group D match at the 13th World Basketball Championship at Athens' Olympic stadium. Australia beat Nigeria 70-64 (Reuters photo)

#### Sunday's schedule (ALL TIMES GMT)

Yugoslavia vs. Canada	14:30
Australia vs. Lithuania	14:30
Russia vs. Italy	16:45
Argentina vs. United States	16:45
Puerto Rico vs. Greece	19:00
Spain vs. Brazil	19:00

#### Friday's results

Lithuania	66	Brazil	62
Yugoslavia	99	Japan	54
United States	88	South Korea	62
Russia	86	Puerto Rico	73
Australia	70	Nigeria	64
Italy	79	Canada	69
Greece	68	Senegal	57
Spain	68	Argentina	67

## Williams, Graf, Davenport advance

STANFORD, California (AP) — Venus Williams hit a slight bump in the road, but it never slowed her down as she went on to defeat Elena Likhovtseva, 6-2, 6-4 in the quarterfinals of the Bank of the West women's tournament.

Steffi Graf, the No. 4 seed, had an easier time of it in a 6-1, 6-3 victory over No. 5 seed Natasha Zvereva in another quarterfinal match.

Top-seeded Lindsay Davenport also advanced to the semifinals with a 7-6 (7-3), 6-1 victory over Tamarine Tanasugarn.

"When I need a point, I know how to win one," said Williams, who meets No. 2 seed Monica Seles in the semifinals Saturday evening. "I've learned a lot."

Williams, the No. 3 seed, held a 5-2 lead in the second set, but Likhovtseva, seeded seventh, broke her serve, then held serve to make it 5-4, but Williams held on for the victory.

"She wanted to stay in the match, so she started getting more balls in play," Williams said of Likhovtseva, ranked 26th in the world.

Williams, who has reached the semifinals in five of the 10 tournaments she's played, is celebrating her first week as a top five player.

Graf, who reaches her third semifinal of the year, was never in trouble, building a 5-0 lead in the first set, then breaking Zvereva's last two serves in the second set.

"She gave me a lot of chances to take immediate action," said Graf. "I kept the pressure on from the beginning."

Graf lost to Zvereva, at Wimbledon, the last time the two met, 6-4, 7-5, though Graf holds a 19-1 career mark against her.

Graf said she was looking forward to her rematch with Zvereva.

"It hurt to lose to her in Wimbledon and I wanted to play well," said Graf.

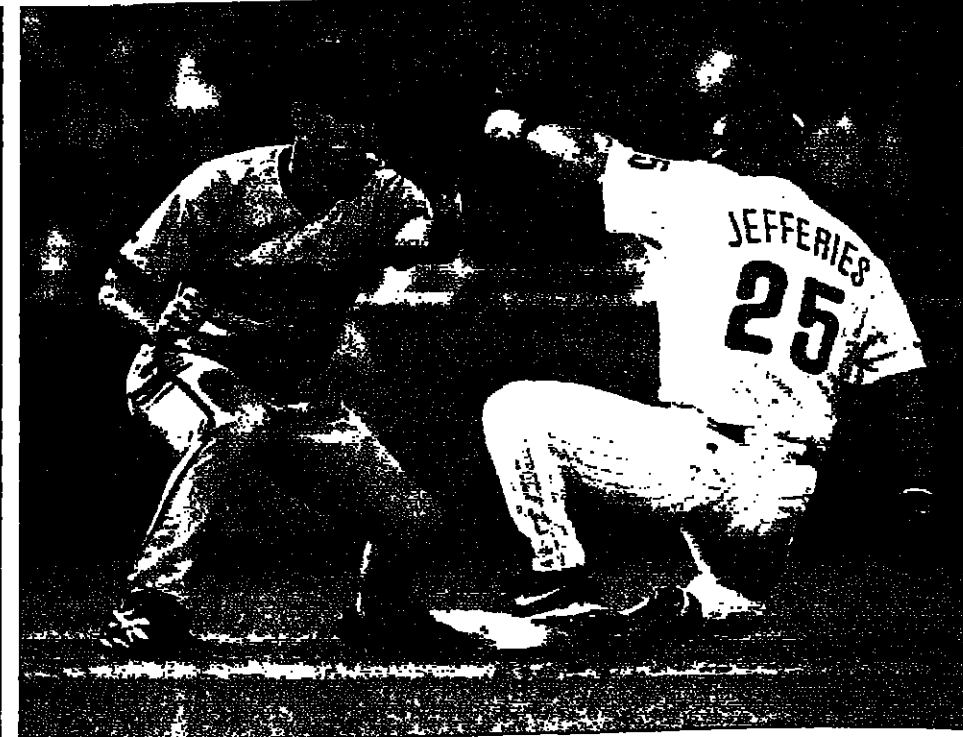
Davenport had a difficult time in the first set against Tanasugarn.

"I felt sluggish at the start, and it was a huge weight lifted off me to win the tiebreaker," said Davenport, ranked third in the world. "I felt more relaxed in the second set."

Davenport, who reached the semifinals for the seventh time in 12 tournaments, will play Graf Saturday afternoon.

Tanasugarn also noticed the difference in Davenport's play between the two sets.

"In the first set she gave me a chance to play well because she was kind of missing a lot," said Tanasugarn. "In the second set, she didn't miss anything and didn't give me a chance at all."



Philadelphia Phillies Greg Jefferies is safe at third base as San Francisco Giants third baseman Bill Mueller waits for the throw during the fifth inning in Philadelphia. Jefferies advanced to third on a throwing error by Giants pitcher Russ Ortiz (Reuters photo)

## Seattle trade Johnson to Houston, highlighting a big day of deals

NEW YORK (AP) — The Houston Astros cupped a wild day of trades, pulling off the biggest deal of all by getting Randy Johnson from the Seattle Mariners just minutes before Friday night's deadline.

Todd Stottlemyre, Juan Guzman, Carlos Perez and Ellis Burks already had moved before the NL Central-leading Astros made their surprising swap and acquired the Big Unit prior to the midnight EDT (0400 GMT) deadline.

The New York Yankees and Cleveland pursued Johnson all week, but Houston got him for two minor leaguers and a player to be named.

In all, 13 trades were made involving 45 players, including 23 major leaguers. Mark Grudzielanek, Willie Blair, Royce Clayton, Todd Zeile, Ed Sprague and Tony Phillips were among those involved.

The New York Mets and Toronto both made three trades, while Boston, Texas, Florida and Milwaukee each made two.

The Rangers got Stottlemyre, Clayton and Zeile in two separate deals while Los Angeles got Grudzielanek and Perez from Montreal for Wilton Guerrero in a multi-player deal.

Johnson, 34, asked for a trade during the offseason after Seattle refused to extend his contract. The 6-foot-10 (2.08-metre) left-hander is eligible to become a free agent after the season.

Johnson is 9-10 with a 4.33 ERA in 23 starts this season and leads the AL with 213 strikeouts.

Houston got Johnson for infielder Carlos Guillen and pitcher Freddy Garcia and a future player.

The Yankees dropped out when Seattle insisted on obtaining Hideki Irabu. New York also was said to be interested in Toronto pitcher Roger Clemens, as were Houston and Texas.

The Rangers, one game behind Anaheim in the AL West, got busy early. They acquired Stottlemyre and Clayton from St. Louis for pitcher Darren Oliver and third baseman Fernando Tatis, and got Zeile from Florida for a pair of minor leaguers.

St. Louis, which last year got Mark McGwire only hours before the trading deadline, gave up two players eligible for free agency at the end of the season.

Stottlemyre, 33, was 9-9 this season with a 3.51 ERA.

Clayton, 28, was hitting just .234 with four homers and 29 RBIs at shortstop.

Oliver, 27, was 6-7 with a 6.53 ERA in 19 starts for Texas.

Tatis, 23, is hitting .270 with three homers and 32 RBIs.

Zeile was traded for the second time this season, having gone from Los Angeles to Florida in May as part of the deal involving Mike Piazza. Zeile, 32, is hitting .276 with 13 homers and 66 RBIs.

Florida got third base prospect Jose Santo and pitcher Daniel DeYoung for Zeile.

The Dodgers, already in the middle of several big deals this season, bolstered themselves for a wild-card run by getting Perez, Grudzielanek and a prospect from Montreal for Guerrero and three minor leaguers.

The Expos got pitcher Ted Lilly, outfielder Peter Bergeron and first baseman Jonathan Tucker in addition to Guerrero.

The Dodgers also got minor league outfielder Hiram Bocachica.

Perez was 7-10 with a 3.75 ERA in 23 starts. Grudzielanek, 28, who tied the major league record for doubles by a shortstop with 54 last season, was batting .276 with eight homers and 41 RBIs.

Guerrero, a 23-year-old second baseman, joins his brother, Expos outfielder Vladimir Guerrero.

Baltimore, eight games behind Boston in the AL wild-card chase, acquired Guzman from Toronto for pitcher Nerio Rodriguez and minor league outfielder Shannon Carter.

Guzman, 31, was 6-12 with a 4.41 ERA. He pitched eight strong innings Thursday night in a 1-0 win over Texas, then said he expected to be traded at any moment.

The San Francisco Giants, bidding for the NL wild-

card spot, traded Darryl Hamilton, minor league pitcher James Stoops and a player to be named to Colorado for Burks in a swap of 33-year-old outfielders.

Burks was batting .286 with 16 homers and 54 RBIs. Hamilton was batting .254 with one homer and 26 RBIs.

In a trade of slumping players, the New York Mets traded outfielder Bernard Gilkey to Arizona for Willie Blair, who leads the majors in losses.

As part of the deal, New York also sent minor league pitcher Nelson Figueroa and cash to the Diamondbacks. The Mets also will receive catcher Jorge Fabrega and a player to be named.

Gilkey, 31, was hitting .227 in 82 games. He sustained a stress fracture in his left elbow early this year and was on the disabled list from April 26 to May 11.

Blair was just 4-15 with a 5.34 ERA in 23 starts for the expansion Diamondbacks.

The Mets, looking for a leadoff man, later got Phillips from Toronto for minor league pitcher Leoncio Ramirez Estrella. The Mets also sent pitcher Bill Pulsipher to Milwaukee for minor league infielder Mike Kinkade.

Toronto also traded third baseman Sprague, one of the few players left from their World Series championship team, to Oakland for minor league pitcher Scott Rivette.

Boston acquired pitcher Greg Swindell and first baseman-outfielder Orlando Merced from Minnesota for three minor league pitchers — Matt Kinney, Joe Thomas and John Barnes.

In a minor deal, the Red Sox traded pitcher Joe Hudson to the Milwaukee Brewers for infielder Eddy Diaz.

And in the last deal announced, the Chicago Cubs obtained reliever Felix Heredia and minor league pitcher Steve Hoff from Florida for third baseman Kevin Orle and minor league pitchers Todd Noel and Justin Speier.

## Hakkinen Schumacher

STUTTGART (AP) — World championship leader Michael Schumacher and his teammate David Coulthard were the fastest qualifying drivers on Saturday for the German Grand Prix.

Hakkinen said he was "definitely the wrong place to be" in the worst qualifying session.

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## Hakkinen on pole as Schumacher places 9th

HOCKENHEIM (AFP) — World championship leader Mika Hakkinen and his teammate David Coulthard set the fastest qualifying times Saturday to grab the front row of the grid for the German Grand Prix.

"I came to Hockenheim to win," Hakkinen said confidently. "That is the target."

Hakkinen's title challenger and German national hero Michael Schumacher in a Ferrari only set ninth best time after a nightmare weekend. "Of course I am disappointed," Schumacher said. "It is definitely the wrong time and the wrong place to have my worst qualifying of the season."

As a master rain driver, the threat of rain Sunday was Schumacher's best hope for a top finish, and heavy rain fell here only a hour after qualifying.

Hakkinen admitted the 350 kph speeds down the famous Hockenheim straight made it "a dangerous circuit in the rain." But, he added, "we are competitive in the wet and we perform in the wet."

It was Hakkinen's seventh pole of the season and the seventh time the McLaren Mercedes "Silver Arrows" had taken the front row of the grid. Jürgen Hubbert, Mercedes board member for passenger cars and in overall charge of racing, watched the achievement from the pit wall.

Coulthard was "a little bit disappointed" that a mechanical problem stopped him fighting for pole in his final runs, having to switch to Hakkinen's spare car.

Coulthard said he was "relaxed for the race. We have a good race car. I just have to get a good start and then see what the strategy is."

He admitted, though, that if he was behind Hakkinen it would be hard for him to pass.

Reigning champion Jacques Villeneuve in a Williams Mecachrome in third place equalled his season best qualifying from the British race.

"At Silverstone we were happy to be third," he said.



World championships leader Mikka Hakkinen (C) of Finland is hugged by his technicians after taking the pole position at the German Formula One Grand Prix in Hockenheim August 1. The race will be held on Sunday August 2 (Reuters photo)

"Here I am almost disappointed, because we were able to fight for the pole."

Schumacher's younger brother Ralf had a season best with the other second row position in his Jordan Mugen Honda, ahead of teammate and former champion Damon Hill.

Ferrari number two Eddie Irvine completed the top six. Schumacher lost all Friday testing a new long wheelbase car that was then parked as being inferior to his standard car.

In Saturday's practice he slid off the track on his first practice lap, losing half the morning session before being able to go out again.

Then after only six laps, he stopped on the track with engine problems. Effectively he had no time to set up his car in qualifying trim, and it showed in the qualifying hour.

But he said that even without his problems, Irvine's time showed that "our performance level was not good enough."

"We have to work very hard for tomorrow to improve the car. It is possible to overtake here, it is a long race and anything can happen," Schumacher said.

Ferrari team chief Jean Todt said Schumacher had failed to improve his early time because of traffic, but television also showed him

making a mistake and locking a front brake on one run.

Hakkinen set the first serious pole time after 16 minutes of the session, topped by Coulthard three minutes later.

Villeneuve, Coulthard and Hakkinen then set new pole times within seconds of each other. The Finn coming out on top after 35 minutes, improving his time with nine minutes to go, then nailing his flag definitively to the pole in the final second of the hour.

His pole time was the first this year to be quicker than 1997 times, following the changes to car and tyre regulations.

Hakkinen attributed it to the increased speed of the narrower cars on the long Hockenheim straights, more power from Mercedes, and harder tyres giving less friction.

After a heavy morning accident in which his head hit the cockpit protection heavily under a 30G load, the Tyrrell team withdrew Brazilian Ricardo Rosset from qualifying. And although the team tried to get permission for him to start, on medical advice he will not race.

The race is due to start at 1400 (1200 local) and cover 45 laps of the long track.

## Woman sues Barkley for \$3m

HOUSTON (AP) — A woman filed a \$3 million lawsuit against Charles Barkley on Friday, accusing him of throwing her against a restaurant wall last year after she complained he was smoking in a nonsmoking area.

Anna Adams said she had also complained that the Houston Rockets basketball star was taking chairs from the table she was sitting at with her husband and guests at Regine's restaurant in Houston in April 1997.

Adams claims that Barkley grabbed her and threw her against a wall when she attempted to leave, causing severe bruising on her neck and shoulders. She said her husband tried to come to her aid and he also was assaulted.

Adams' lawyer, Larry McDougal, said she had to be treated the following day for her injuries. It was not immediately clear why she waited more than a year to sue.

No charges were ever filed against Barkley, who was out of town Friday and unavailable for comment. A Rockets spokesman said the team would not comment.

The lawsuit is just the latest complaint against Barkley. In June, he was fined and ordered to make community service visits to two children's programs to settle charges that he threw a man through a window at an Orlando, Florida bar last October.

In August 1997, a jury rejected a \$550,000 lawsuit from a man who claimed Barkley beat him up at a Cleveland nightclub.

And Barkley and fellow NBA player Jayson Williams were accused of being in a bar fight in Chicago in 1992. Charges were dropped.

Also in 1992, Barkley was acquitted of misdemeanor battery charges brought by a man who said the player broke his nose outside a Milwaukee bar.

## Goodwill Games Russian walkout threat spurs banishment of boxing officials

NEW YORK (AFP) — In the wake of a Russian threat to withdraw four boxing finalists from the Goodwill Games in protest of decisions by judges and referees, four tournament boxing officials were banished.

Cuba's Alfredo Toledo and Guatemala's Macario Sosa, who served as both referees and judges, plus Swedish judge Per-Olaf Larsson and German judge Dieter Milka were removed from title bouts Friday.

"We believe we have taken the action necessary and we are certainly pleased the Russians have decided to continue in the program rather than upset the goodwill created by the Goodwill Games," said Australian Arthur Tunstall, the International Amateur Boxing Association (AIBA) delegate to the Goodwill Games.

It's unfortunate the Russians believe they were unjustly treated. Certainly there have been questionable, quite questionable, decisions. But I think that is always the case with amateur boxing. We just want to make it very clear that in our opinion it's not all one-sided."

Russian fighters lost 10 of 14 semi-final bouts. World 60-kilogramme champion Aleksandr Maletin fell 19-15 to Cuba's Mario Kindelan and world 63.5kg runner-up Paata Gvasaliya lost 12-5 to American Ricardo Williams.

Two narrow semi-final losses



South African Rik Neethling takes a breath as he swims in the men's 800m race for the World Team All Stars at the Goodwill Games against the USA. Neethling won the race with a time of 8:07.28 (Reuters photo)

ments, it was decided by the AIBA international jury that suspensions of certain officials were warranted. It's an unfortunate incident."

The suspended foursome must undergo re-testing before they are allowed to officiate in another international competition.

"Like everything in life, some people do become a little bit lax and they may be taking things for granted too much," Tunstall said. Russia's lone title in Friday's first six finals came when Andre Mishin beat American Larry Mosley 11-3 at 67kg.

Cuban reigning world and Olympic champion Maikro

final. Mario Kindelan won the other Cuban gold, beating 60kg rival Jacob Hudson of the United States 13-4.

The only bad news for Cuba came at 54kg where Uzbekistan's Timur Tulyakov landed a right and left to the head in the final seconds to upset Cuban 1997 world runner-up Waldemar Font 15-14.

American Todd Eldredge, who finished a disappointing fourth at the Nagano Olympics, won his first major international figure skating crown since the 1996 world championships, edging Russia's Aleksei Urmanov. Urmanov was competing in his first event since a severe

groin injury at the 1997 world championships, a pain that kept him from defending his 1994 Olympic crown at Nagano.

American Tim Goebel landed a quadruple salchow, only the second quad by an American. Goebel, 17, has done them both. "I was absolutely thrilled," Goebel said. "It was probably the best program I have ever done in my entire life."

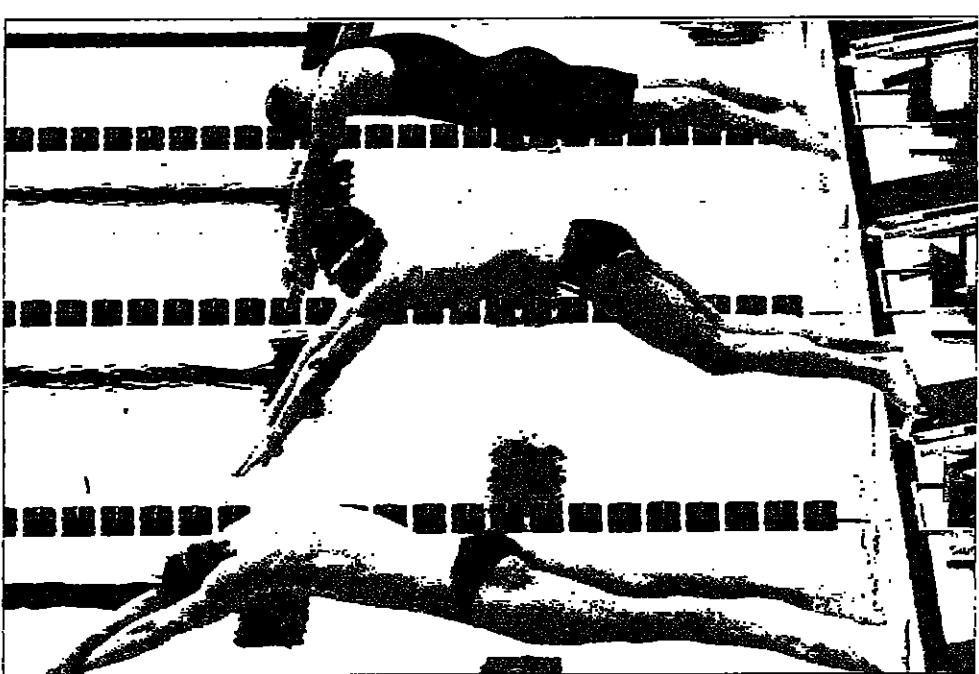
World champions and Olympic silver medalists Elena Berezhnaya and Anton Sikharulidze of Russia won the pairs competition with Nagano gold medalists Oksana Kazakova and Artur Dmitriev second.

In men's swimming dual meets, the World All-Stars routed the United States 78-43 while Russia beat Germany 84-38. The unbeaten World team can win the title by defeating Germany in Sunday's dual meet.

Canada's Curtis Myden swam a 1998 world-best time of 2:00.38 in the 200-meter individual medley while American Lenny Krayzelburg improved on his world-tide winning time by taking the 200 backstroke in 1:58.17.

Brazil's Fernando Scherer became only the fourth man below 49 seconds in the 100 freestyle, clocking 48.91.

World beach volleyball number ones Sheila Bede and Adriana Behar of Brazil and Americans Lisa Arce and Holly McPeak completed preliminary play unbeaten and can advance to the finals with semi-final triumphs Saturday.



German Stefan Herbst (top) Russian Alexandr Popov (C) and German Alexander Luederitz dive into the pool at the start of the men's 50m freestyle race at the Goodwill Games. Popov won the race with a time of 22.75 (Reuters photo)

es annoyed the Russians. American Ebo Elder edged Dmitri Pavluchenkov 12-11 at 63.5kg when the Russian was denied a point on apparent equalising blow in the final seconds.

"It was the opinion of the Russian Boxing Federation that judgments made by the officials were biased and led to the elimination of some of their boxers," Tunstall said. "Upon review of the judg-

ment, Romero beat Russia's Aleksan Nalbaniyan 10-5 for the 48kg title, the first of four won by Cuban fighters.

Reigning world and two-time Olympic champions Felix Savon and Ariel Hernandez claimed Goodwill gold. Hernandez edged France's Jean-Paul Mendy 15-14 at 75kg.

Savon stopped American DaVaryl Williamson 55 seconds into their heavyweight

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## Agassi, Henman advance to L.A. semis

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Andre Agassi kept up his recent habit of speedy victories, defeating Australian Sandon Stolle 7-6 (7-2), 6-2 Friday in just over an hour to advance to the Mercedes Cup semifinals.

Agassi won his ninth straight match without dropping a set since Wimbledon. His streak includes a title last week at Washington, where his matches averaged 59 minutes. He beat Stolle in 1 hour, 20 minutes.

"I tend to walk quick, but when it comes time to serve I slow it down," he said. "I don't think I rush out there."

Agassi advanced to Saturday's semifinals against Justin Gimelstob, who upset top-seeded Patrick Rafter 6-4, 6-3 in the night match.

"I know he wants a piece of me," said Gimelstob, who earned the biggest victory of his career here last year when he beat Agassi in the first round.

In other quarterfinals, No. 7 seed Tim Henman beat No. 7 Byron Black 5-7, 6-1, 6-4 and Guillaume Raoux of France ousted local favorite Michael Joyce 6-7 (7-9), 6-4, 7-5.

Agassi didn't take the court until nearly 0100 GMT after the two previous matches went three sets. By then, the sun was going down and towing trees on the UCLA college campus cast long shadows across the court.

"You can't see the ball at all that time of day," he said.

"My game is based around hitting the ball cleanly and I didn't have any confidence at all the first set that I could swing and hit it cleanly in the shadows."

Agassi's coach, Brad Gilbert, came on the court during the first changeover in the second set, part of the ATP Tour's experiment with coaching during matches. Los Angeles is the final stop in a five-tournament experiment.

"He was trying to get me to swing out on my shots because I couldn't see with the shadows," said Agassi, who played his first two matches here at night.

Agassi broke Stolle to take a 2-0 lead after Gilbert's two-minute pep talk. He fought off triple break point in the fifth game and took a 4-1 lead

when Stolle netted a forehand volley.

Stolle, whose father, Fred, won the doubles title here in 1968 with Ken Rosewall, held serve to trail 4-2. But Agassi held serve with an ace and then broke Stolle on his second match point to win.

Against Rafter, Gimelstob closed out the first set with a forehand crosscourt return. He ached Rafter to take a 4-1 lead in the second set. The Australian held serve and then broke back to trail 4-3. But Gimelstob, a former collegiate doubles champion at UCLA before turning pro in

1996, regained the break on Rafter's double fault for a 5-3 lead.

Gimelstob blew triple match point and survived two deuces before Rafter netted a forehand service return to end the match.

"It's just another loss. Life goes on," said Rafter, who'll defend his U.S. Open title later this month. "I'm still hitting the ball well, so I'm not too discouraged by the loss."

Gimelstob was cheered by several friends on the court where he played and practiced hundreds of times in college.

"I'm not shocked, I'm excited," he said. "I've been working hard and preparing myself to win that kind of match."

It's proof I'm ready to take the next step."

GOREN BRIDGE			
WITH OMAR SHARIF & TANNAR HIRSCH			
RENDER UNTO CAESAR			
Both vulnerable. South deals.			
NORTH			
♠ A 9 5 2			
♥ 7 3			
♦ A 8 7 3			
♣ A 6 2			
WEST			
♠ J 6			
♥ Q 9 8 5			
♦ Q K J 6			
♣ Q 10 5			
EAST			
♠ Q 10 7 4 3			
♥ 6 2			
♦ 10 9 5 2			
♣ J 7			
SOUTH			
♠ K 8			
♥ A K J 10 4			
♦ 4			
♣ K 9 8 4 3			
The bidding:			
SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST			
1♣ Pass 1♠ Pass			
2♠ Pass 2♥ Pass			
3♥ Pass 3NT Pass			
4♥ Pass 4♠ Pass			
Opening lead: King of ♠			
How you play one suit more often than not depends on the number of losers you have in others. Here is an example first reported by the late Terence Reese.			
South wisely decided that the hand would play better in a suit contract than three no trump. Five clubs is actually the best game con-			

tract, but four hearts is not unreasonable if declarer is an accomplished technician. Suppose that South were to win the opening diamond lead in dummy and immediately take the heart finesse. That loses, and a diamond continuation forces declarer down to the same trump length as West. Now declarer can't draw all the trumps or else, when South surrenders a club, the defenders can cash at least two diamond tricks. No matter what South does, the contract will go down to defeat. Correct technique is for declarer first to test the crucial side suit to find out how many tricks must be lost there. When both defenders follow to the ace and king of clubs, leaving declarer with just one loser in that suit, South can afford to concede two trump tricks. All declarer has to do is cash the ace and king of hearts and, when both defenders follow, the contract can be claimed. Declarer abandons trumps in favor of surrendering a club. The diamond return is ruffed and declarer simply continues leading clubs. The defenders can ruff whenever they please, but there is no way they can get more than two hearts and a club.



## PNA security chief slams Hamas again

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AP) — For the second time in a week, a top Palestinian security official slammed Hamas, suggesting the possibility of a new crackdown on the militant Islamist movement.

Mohammad Dahlan, head of Preventive Security in the Gaza Strip, told the London-based Arabic magazine Al Wasat that Hamas was "an obstacle to establishing the Palestinian Authority's political achievements."

Hamas, or the Islamic Resistance Movement, is the main opposition to Yasser Arafat's Palestinian National Authority (PNA). Hamas opposes the Oslo peace accords and has claimed responsibility for suicide bomb attacks that have killed scores of Israelis in recent years.

In the interview, published Saturday in the Ramallah-based newspaper Al Ayyam, Mr. Dahlan said Hamas "presents itself not as an opposition group but as an alternative" to the PNA.

Mr. Dahlan blamed Hamas for helping bring Israel's hard-line Prime Minister Benjamin

Netanyahu to power by carrying out a series of suicide bombings before the May 1996 Israeli elections.

For most of Mr. Netanyahu's term, there have not been face-to-face negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians, so "Hamas is destroying the PNA and not just limiting it," Mr. Dahlan said.

Hamas spokesman Mahmoud Zahar said the group would have no immediate response to Mr. Dahlan's remarks.

Mr. Dahlan also criticised Hamas' founder and spiritual leader, Sheikh Ahmad Yassin, who recently returned to Gaza from a three-month fund-raising tour of Arab states. Sheikh Yassin has repeatedly criticised Mr. Arafat's policies and advocated a return to armed struggle.

"The tour of Sheikh Yassin was aimed at pressuring the Palestinian Authority to make concessions," Mr. Dahlan said.

The PNA has been accused by the United States and Israel of releasing Hamas militants as fast as it arrests them, but Mr. Dahlan said he would not bow to outside pressure on

the matter.

"We released them... because we have no concerns about them security-wise," he said.

Mr. Dahlan said he does not support trials for political prisoners because trials "are the demand of the Israeli prime minister." Palestinian security forces currently detain Hamas activists for varying periods of time without trials, a practice that has drawn condemnation from international human rights groups.

The security chief said that there was a "common ground" between the PNA and Hamas leaders inside the Palestinian areas, but that there was "a tremendous gap" with Hamas leaders in other countries, who he called were "far from reality."

Mr. Dahlan's counterpart in the West Bank, Jibril Rajoub, told reporters last week that Hamas would not be allowed to become too powerful.

"I didn't take part in the national struggle for 18 years... to see Sheikh Ahmad Yassin leading the Palestinian people," Mr. Rajoub said.



INSECTS FOR THE TWIN'S BIRTHDAY: Japan's famous twin sisters Gin Kanie, left, and Kin Narita, center, react to the 'bell-ring' insects, given, as their birthday present, by a local beauty pageant titleholder Kaori Mizuno on Friday in Nagoya, 350 kilometres west of Tokyo. The twins celebrated their 106th birthday anniversary and displayed the love of nice twinkle sound made by the cricket-like insects which are popular pets among Japanese kids (AP/KYODO photo)

## Grand jurors to see Clinton testify on closed-circuit TV

WASHINGTON (AP) — Grand jurors will watch President Bill Clinton's testimony live on closed-circuit television Aug. 17, and Mr. Clinton promises he will "completely and truthfully" answer prosecutors' questions about Monica Lewinsky.

The jurors can submit questions for prosecutors to pose, a legal source familiar with the arrangements said Friday on condition of anonymity.

Meanwhile, new information emerged about the dark blue cocktail dress that Ms. Lewinsky, a former White House intern, turned over earlier this week, telling prosecutors it was stained during a sexual encounter with Mr. Clinton. The president has denied under oath that he had any such relationship.

A law enforcement source familiar with the evidence, demanding anonymity, said the dress now being examined at the FBI laboratory has a visible stain. But the lab still must test to determine the composition of the stain, and whether it contains DNA material that could eventually be compared with Mr. Clinton's, the source said.

As the Ms. Lewinsky investigation moves closer to completion, Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr placed himself in position to devote full time to the probe.

He took an unpaid leave from his law firm Friday after juggling his public and private jobs for nearly four years.

Mr. Clinton, commenting about his upcoming testimony in an appearance in the White House Rose Garden, said: "No one wants to get this matter behind us more than I do, except maybe all the rest of the American people." When reporters shouted a chorus of questions, the president held up both hands and said, "Wait, wait, wait, wait. Everybody's got a question. Let me give you the answer to all of them."

"I am looking forward to the opportunity in the next few days of testifying. I will do so completely and truthfully. I am anxious to do it. But I hope you can understand why, in the interim, I can and should have no further comment on these matters."

Meanwhile, Paula Jones, the former Arkansas state employee whose now-disputed sexual harassment charges against Mr. Clinton sparked the Lewinsky investigation, pleaded with a federal appeals court in St. Louis to reinstate her lawsuit and restore "fundamental principles of decency, humanity and respect for the law."

In legal papers, Ms. Jones' lawyers argued: "Mr. Clinton's behaviour towards Ms. Lewinsky is evidence of his habit of making aggressive sexual advances to young, low-ranking employees."

On Capitol Hill, lawmakers were concerned about receiving a possible impeachment report from Mr. Starr just as they need to campaign for reelection.

Several members of the House Judiciary Committee, the first step for any impeachment proceedings, said that even if Mr. Starr submits a report as early as September, the major work would not be done until after the November election.

"If, indeed, there's substantial credible evidence of impeachable offences... it seems that ought to supersede anything," said Rep. Bob Barr, who has long called for Mr. Clinton's impeachment.

Rep. George Gekas, who has no election challenge, said he would be willing to begin studying a report and brief other lawmakers. But, he said: "The real analysis and review would not be done until after the election." There also is a question of whether the House would do its own investigation rather than just accepting Mr. Starr's conclusions.

## Iran bans renamed daily under conservative pressure

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran's judiciary on Saturday banned a liberal newspaper close to President Mohammad Khatami, amid growing pressure from Islamists, the official IRNA news agency announced.

It said Tehran's justice department ordered the daily Toos to stop publishing from Sunday because it had violated the country's press law.

Earlier on Saturday, dozens of Islamists beat up the chief editor of Toos, Mostafaei Shamsolvaaziri, a day after the

paper came under attack from the head of the judiciary.

The Islamists, members of Hizbullah, vowed to use force to close the paper.

"We will intervene with force if the authorities do not stop the publication of this paper under a new name," their spokesman said.

The newspaper, formerly published under the name Jameh, was ordered closed by a press court last month for allegedly "publishing lies and disrupting public order."

But it immediately reappeared under the new name of Toos, a move which angered hard-line conservatives.

Culture Minister Ataollah Mohajerani, a moderate working for press freedom, defended the decision for Toos to use Jameh's editorial team, saying it was not technically in violation of Iran's press law.

But conservative judiciary chief Ayatollah Mohammad Yazdi on Friday attacked Mr. Mohajerani's "lax" policies on the press, criticising the minister



"Lucky 13" wins jackpot

WESTERVILLE (R) — The "Lucky 13" who won the \$161 million Powerball lottery jackpot became the mysterious dozen as one winner and his wife went public and began spending their money. "No one wants the press cover," said Larry Sturtz, the lawyer and unofficial spokesman for the lottery winners, all men working as machinists at the AT&T Ohio Inc. robotics factory on the outskirts of Columbus. Sturtz said he would try to preserve the winners' anonymity by creating a trust, to be called "Lucky 13," that would claim the prize next week without the men having to face cameras. The men had jokingly given their group that name long before hitting the jackpot.

## Prince Charles celebrates early 50th birthday

LONDON — Prince Charles celebrated an early 50th birthday party with his two sons and long-standing companion Camilla Parker Bowles amongst the 100 guests. Prince William and Prince Harry performed alongside screen stars Emma Thompson and Stephen Fry in an hour-long comedy sketch especially written for the festivities at Charles' Highgrove residence in western England, the Mirror newspaper said. The young prince's act had been planned as a surprise but was leaked to a Sunday newspaper a few weeks ago. The Mirror said the queen was planning a 200,000 pounds birthday party for Prince Charles, inviting 1,000 guests to Buckingham Palace.

## Queen Elizabeth visits McDonald's, but doesn't bite

ELLSMERE PORT (AP) — Queen Elizabeth II stopped at a McDonald's restaurant Friday just for a chat and a photo op, not for a Big Mac. Both the monarch and the restaurant ought to be delighted.

Responding to surveys which found that the public regard the monarch as too remote, the queen has lately made a point of showing a common touch, including a visit to a pensioner in the east end of London, and a trip to a supermarket. "I couldn't have imagined the queen driving through a burger bar a few years ago," said Jean Reynolds, 54, of Liverpool, who is in the crowd welcoming the queen. "The royal family is certainly moving with the times these days," Reynolds said.

## Blair takes family on holiday to Italy and France

LONDON (AFP) — British Prime Minister was expected to take his family on a three-week holiday to Italy and France on Saturday. He will stay at the Renaissance-style Tuscan palace, owned by Prince Girolamo Guicciardini Sorzoli in the village of Cusano, which caused a stir in the British press after it emerged that Sorzoli and his family were leaving their home to make way for the Blair and his security entourage. After a fortnight at the villa they will then go to France for a week, where they are expected to stay in Saint-Martin d'Oyde, a village near Toulouse.

## DiCaprio meets Sang Lan

NEW YORK (AFP) — "Titanic" heartthrob Leonardo DiCaprio visited paralysed Chinese gymnast Sang Lan in the hospital where she is recovering from spine surgery. The hospital officials said DiCaprio, 23, spent one hour with Sang, whose hospital room is reportedly covered with posters of the Hollywood swooner. New York media reported this week that Sang wished to meet DiCaprio and singer Celine Dion, and that she was learning some basic English phrases. "Hello! How are you?" just in case the stars dropped by.

## Khatami urges U.S. to distance itself from Israeli 'threat'

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran's President Mohammad Khatami on Saturday branded Israel as a major threat to the region because of its weapons of mass destruction and urged Washington to distance itself from the Jewish state.

"Israel is today the biggest threat as it has always exposed its teeth and claws," Mr. Khatami said after a visit to the defence ministry to inspect Iran's weapons manufacturing capability.

"Israel has turned into one of the most dangerous arsenals for atomic, chemical and biological weapons, constantly threatening the world," he said, quoted by the official Iranian news agency IRNA.

Mr. Khatami said "a considerable part of U.S. policies is influenced by Israeli policies," warning that "this is to the detriment of the American nation in the long run."

"Such a backward attitude leads to policies which would only divide nations," said Mr. Khatami, who has called for greater understanding

standing between the American and Iranian peoples.

"It is regrettable that because of Zionist pressure, the American nation's great resources are not used for the advancement of human-

*"It is regrettable that because of Israeli pressure, America's resources are not used for the advancement of humanity"*

ity," the president added.

Relations between Tehran and Washington, severed since 1980, have thawed since Mr. Khatami, a moderate cleric, took office a year ago.

Mr. Khatami was invited to the defence ministry on Saturday to view footage of a missile test-fired last month as well as an exhibition on Iran's weapons capabilities.

Apart from viewing the

film, he inspected missiles of various ranges which are reported to be entirely manufactured in Iran.

Iran tested on July 22 a new missile with a range of 1,300 kilometres, bringing most Middle East countries, including Israel, Saudi Arabia and Turkey within its reach.

The United States has said a U.S. spy satellite detected the launch and voiced concern over the development.

But Mr. Khatami defended Tehran's "right to a strong defence to counter any outside threats," while saying Iran was opposed to weapons of mass destruction and posed "no threats to any friendly countries."

"I say explicitly that we are opposed to weapons of mass destruction because of our Islamic and moral values. Security and tranquillity is the best way to ensure human advancement," Mr. Khatami said.

Tehran has criticised what it calls U.S. "double standards" in seeking to keep Iran's weapons capabilities in check while keeping silent on Israel's.



PHOTO BY DAD: Popular Syrian singer Elias Karam, who is famous for his strict Arabic songs known as Tarab, shakes hands with 5-year-old Ruba, the daughter of Jordan Times photographer Yusef 'Allan (Photo by Yusef 'Allan)

## Expensive 'fewer digits' craze hits Beirut

By Jacques Lhuillier  
Agence France Presse

BEIRUT — Cruising in a luxury car through Beirut wouldn't be much fun without those special designer licence plates. Some drivers here are ready to pay as much as \$30,000 to have.

Most cars in Lebanon bear seven-digit registration plates written in both Latin and Arabic script.

But the national obsession for showing off has provoked a craze in recent months for fewer digits, be they for licence plates or cellular phone numbers.

The "most-wanted" plates are those with three-digit numbers and are so popular they sell for \$15,000 to \$30,000 each.

"There are only about 700 to 800 plates with three digits," says Ali, a 30-year-old trader who specialises in finding rare and desirable plate numbers for clients.

"The most expensive ones [bear] the numbers 200, 300, 400, 222, 333..." he says, reclining off the ground numbers and triple strikes that spell pure

bliss to the lucky owner.

Plates with four or five digits are only slightly less popular. Prices for them can increase to several thousand dollars if they can still show off a round figure such as "25000" or a stack of pairs, such as "2233."

But there are many other nuances to plate numerology which in Beirut can tell as much about a man as his clothes.

Some plates reveal potent political connections: a tag number beginning with the number five means that the owner is a protégé of the interior minister.

Those plates are clearly passed down through the generations. The number "1000" for example, is used by a politician who inherited it from his father, who was a former president of the republic.

Licence plates for mere private citizens begin after the number "150."

Beirut's fetish for tag numbers arouses the kind of passions reserved in other countries for lottery ticket numbers. "This is crazy! Eighty per cent of the people who go to the police department to register

their new car say the same thing: 'Please, give me a good number,'" says Ali.

A "good number" could be that of a former government minister who paid \$30,000 to have the number "535" on his BMW 535. Or it may be the number "600" on a prominent banker's Mercedes 600.

One politician, in a famous double-coup, even managed to get the number 1941, the year of his birth, for both his licence plate and cellular phone line.

A good plate not only boosts a car's image but also its resale value, as any car dealer here knows.

"You see this white BMW? It is a 1987 model worth \$5,000, but because of its special number, it is for sale at \$7,000," one salesman says.

He points to another car in his showroom. "This second-hand Mercedes 300 costs \$33,000, but with a three-digit plate number it would be sold for twice as much."

Taxi drivers, too, benefit from the game.

Rafik Nsouli operates a large taxi company whose stars are two Mercedes 600s each bearing four-digit plates. The tag-

cost him a cool \$3,000 each.

"My clients... always ask for the four-digit plates, and the driver is given instructions never to mention that it is a hired car," said Nsouli.

Just how much money is spent here on designer licences is impossible to know, but by all accounts it is a booming business.

Ali says that a client once asked him to find the number "5258," which pairs the man's birthday with that of his wife. "I found it, bought it and he paid me \$3,000," says Ali the plate hunter.

But the trade could soon suffer from a new law designed to standardise licence plates to six numbers and a letter designating one of the country's six districts.

The new law also forbids selling a licence plate independently of the car registered to it.

But there is a loophole: Owners of special registration numbers can seek official permission to keep their current plates.

World leaders s  
goodwish cable

MAYO CLINIC (Petra) — His Majesty King Abdullah II of Jordan on Sunday received Saudi Ambassador Prince Bandar Ben Sultan, who from Saudi King Fahd Ben Abdul King Hussein also received cable greetings from Tunisian President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, Lebanese President Ezzeddine Boutros Youssef, Russian President Boris Yeltsin, Senegalese President Jammé Zouly, and Cuban President Eduardo Fiorenza.

Volume 23 Number 69

## House explains Deputy: H

By Ahmad Khatib  
Special to the Jordan Times

JERUSALEM — A parliamentary committee investigating recent assassinations in Amman has accused the government of "human and operational errors" in the main Waqf Water Treatment Plant leading the capital caused the

assassinations. The Lower House's Agriculture and Water Committee, in a report to be formally published on Tuesday, blamed the "human and operational errors" in the main Waqf Water Treatment Plant leading the capital caused the

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